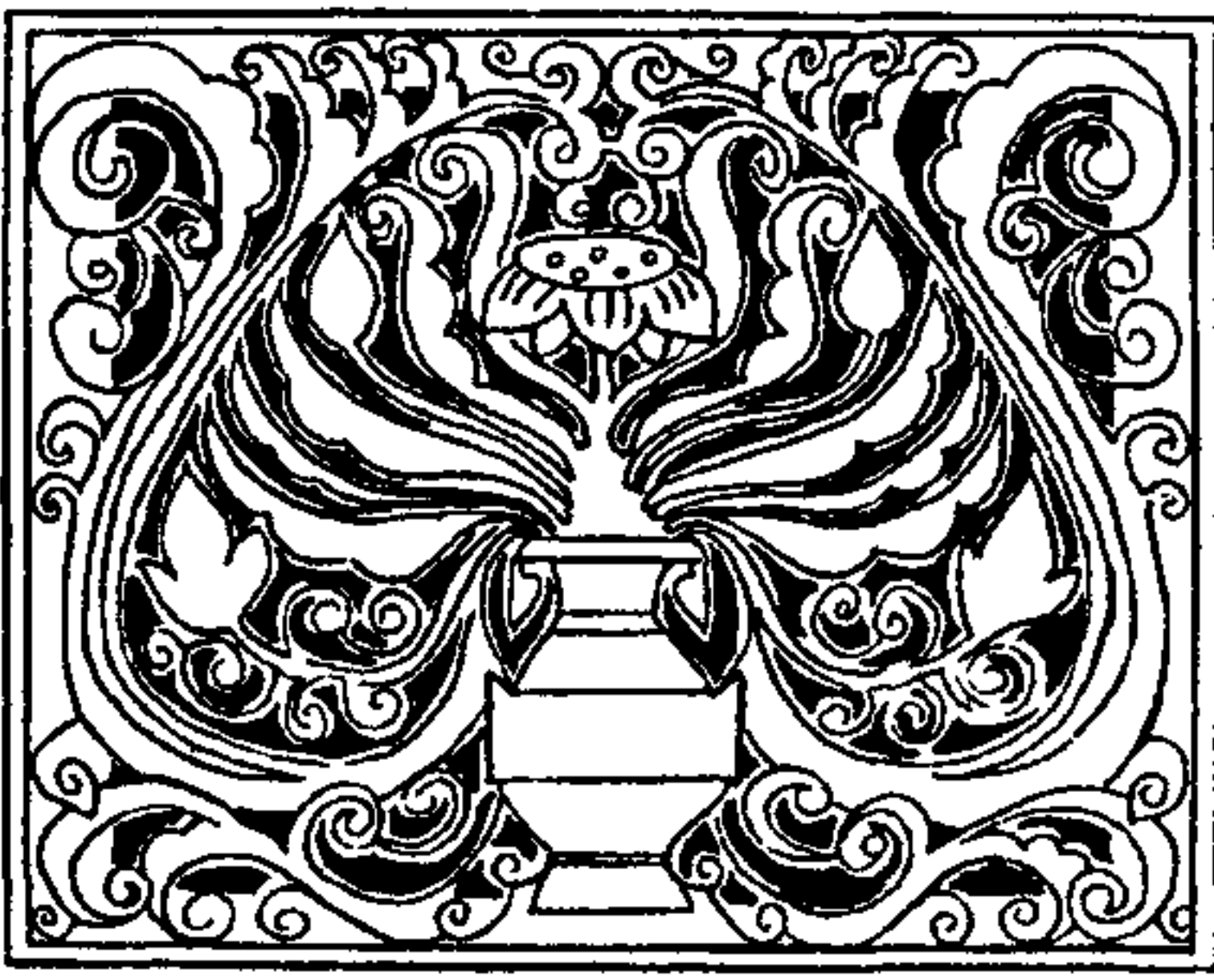




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CONTENTS

Vedic Prayers		649
Vivekananda's Gifts to America		
Editorial		650
Images of India's Past		656
Swami Vivekananda in Detroit		
Susan Walters		657
Religion and Life: Swami Bhuteshanandaji's		
Answers to Questions		
A Compilation		667
Mundaka Upanishad		
Swami Sridharananda		669
Bestow Your Vision on Me		
Sri Chaitanya		674

Continued on the next page

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—Swami Vivekananda

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 104

JULY 1999

No. 7

VEDIC PRAYERS

नू च पुरा च सदनं रयीणां
जातस्य च जायमानस्य च क्षां।
सतश्च गोपां भवतश्च भूरे-
र्देवा अग्निं धारयन्द्रविणोदां॥

—Rg Veda, 1.96.7

द्रविणोदा द्रविणसस्तुरस्य
द्रविणोदाः सनरस्य प्र यंसत्।
द्रविणोदा वीरवतीमिषं नो
द्रविणोदा रासते दीर्घमायुः॥

—Rg Veda, 1.96.8

एवा नो अग्ने समिधा वृधानो
रेवूत्पावक श्रवसे वि भाहि।
तत्रो मित्रो वरुणो मामहंतां
अदितिः सिन्धुः पृथिवी उत द्यौः॥

—Rg Veda, 1.96.9

Both in ancient times as well as now, Agni is the abode of all wealth. He is the home (*kṣām*) of all that is born, and of all that will be born in the future. Agni is the protector of all that is existent now, and of all the multitudes of things to be created in future. Such a splendid Agni, who is the giver of wealth, is the emissary of the gods to us (as he carries our offerings to them).

May the giver of wealth (or power) provide us with movable wealth. May the giver of wealth (or power) provide us with immovable wealth. May the giver of wealth (or power) provide us with heroes and plenty of food. May the giver of wealth (or power) grant us long life.

O purifier Agni! having grown brighter on account of our firewood (*samit*) and other oblations, glow more and more brilliantly so as to bestow abundant wealth, prosperity, and food on us. May all gods—like the sun, the rain god, the earth with its oceans, and the sky—protect us as well as our resources.

Vivekananda's Gifts to America

EDITORIAL

Everything in the life of a prophet—birth, activities, passing away—is meaningful. Swami Vivekananda chose to give up his body on the 4th of July, the day America got its independence. This must have some relevance. What is it? What did Swami Vivekananda contribute to America? Though the Smithsonian Institute's *Abroad in America: Visitors to the New Nation* considers Vivekananda as one of the important visitors to that nation between 1776 and 1914, a doubt is expressed in some quarters about the contribution of Swami Vivekananda to the West. It is also said that Swamiji's role at the parliament of religions at Chicago is exaggerated.

To know what exactly Swamiji did for the United States, we must study the growth and development of this great nation. Even as a human being is trichotomus—he has a body, a mind and a soul, a nation too is trichotomous. We shall study the development of the United States accordingly.

The External Development

From Virginia to Vivekananda—that is our scope of study: the two Vs have played a vital role, though inconspicuously, in the making of the United States. Around 1605, it was Virginia's tobacco that brought the fortune-loving immigrants to the American soil from Great Britain. In spite of the autocratic leadership of the likes of Sir Thomas Dale, the immigrants settled there, though not very comfortably. Slowly, however, the situation changed. Soon, the surrounding regions too got filled up: the Pilgrims came, the Catholics seeking safe haven came, and before the beginning of the 17th century, Plymouth, Maryland, New England, Massachusetts Bay, and a number of other states had become popu-

lated. But it was all under the Imperial rule. The nation steadily stretched westward. Agriculture was the mainstay. Meanwhile, several other races were also setting foot, like the French (who, of course, had begun settling long before), the Germans, the Africans (whose entering the United States led to big issue of slave trade), the Scot-Irish etc. As generations changed the Imperial hold on the settlers began loosening slowly. But for a set of occasional laws and acts, what else could the British empire do to control a people who were geographically so distant from it? Hence the 'distance' widened so much that economic chains could no more bind the settlers. Unrest increased. Wars broke out during the 1750s and seeped into the 1770s. A period of turmoil ensued, and finally, the United States became politically free in 1776. With the nation attaining physical freedom, intellectual freedom too was bestowed on it. For, under subjection, free thinking is not quite possible. This is about the nation's sociopolitical freedom.

The Internal Development

While the 17th century America experienced agricultural instability, growing population, political uncertainty and other problems, the 18th century America was ready for self-rule. Such was the terrible speed in which this nation progressed. The early 19th century saw the dawn of industrialization; the quality of human life slowly improved, and Americans never looked back. Today, this great nation enjoys the bliss of economic prosperity like never before, with the yearly per capita income being over \$18,000. The Pulitzer Prize-winning book by Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, says:

It is not simply that eighteenth-century

America was a pre-industrial and a pre-urban world (the greatest metropolis in British North America numbered only 30,000 to 40,000 souls and townsmen commonly worked at agricultural pursuits). It was also pre-romantic and pre-humanitarian, little concerned with the problems of social justice or with alleviating human suffering.... None of this was unique to America. These were common characteristics of the *ancien régime*, pre-modern in its social concerns and conditions.... Civil and incivil, cultivated and half-wild, sophisticated and deeply provincial, it was a society of jarring contrasts....¹

The 'pre-humanitarian-ness' also refers to the evils of slavery, which contributed to a great number of immigrants entering from the African side. But the unfortunate practice was soon put an end to.

Side by side with agricultural and economic growth, America grew intellectually also. Sociopolitical stability (though wars like the one in 1812 were often there to disturb the balance) brought a considerable change in the perspectives of the people. Higher thinking was nourished. The first ever philosophical society in America had already come up by 1744. Religious revivals also took place during this period; special mention may be made of the 'Great Awakening' of the 1740s which was a drive against the increasingly secular nature of life. Now, a heterogeneous nation cannot be satisfied with a single set of religious doctrines. 'With the Industrial Revolution "splendid isolation" became increasingly difficult.... With new inventions in transportation the world was brought so close together that isolation became impossible....'² Either out of initial curiosity or owing to the

aspiration of the intellect to know more and more, America widened its horizons and this led it toward the East.

Several important books have been written about the United States' interest in the East. Of them, Carl T. Jackson's *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* is very thorough, while Dale Riepe's *The Philosophy of India and its Impact on American Thought* is significant. These authors are at pains to study systematically the growth of American interest in the Orient. We shall give a very brief summary of that interest here.

The first ever American to spend 27 long years in India and also to be the governor of Madras was Elihu Yale born in 1649. Cotton Mather was the first ever American to express interest in Asian thought. He published letters in 1721 about Christians converting Hindus. Samuel Lorenzo Knopp was perhaps the first to speak about the Indian religion. The words 'Hindoo', 'Brumma', etc were used in his story, published from Boston in 1802. Missionary attention in Asia grew with the growing trade interests of the United States. Armies of American missionaries were tutored and sent to India and China. William Bentley, a minister in a Church in Salem, spoke about the missionaries as 'totally uninformed...unprepared and not apparently of a taste and capacity....'³ It was these missionaries who (mis)informed about India, its customs and religions, and methodically coloured the noble American mind. But the great Americans were not to be taken for a ride all that easily, though, owing to lack of contrary information, many believed the missionaries. For some time at least, only misinformation reached America. Hence, great men like Benjamin Franklin (who was a friend of the Orientalist William Jones) were critical of Indian

1. Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), pp. 4-5.

2. Harold Underwood Faulkner and Tyler Kepner, *America: Its History and People* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), Vol. 2, p. 614.

3. Cf. Carl T. Jackson, *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* (London: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. 9.

religion. In spite of brainwashing, some sincere missionaries were stunned to see the real picture of India. Wrote a missionary after several years in India: 'I love India. I love her soil. I love her people. I repudiate as a calumny many things that have been said of this country.'⁴

The role of women, daughters of the Goddess of Learning, in spreading true knowledge is never exaggerated. It was a woman who fought to drive away the dark clouds that the chimneys of the missionary-factories had sent over the American skies. Hannah Adams, though with limited sources, struggled immensely to publish *A View of Religions* in 1801—an impartial work which gave equal importance to all faiths, studying them objectively. She had initiated a wonderful work of objective study. The launching of the American exploration of Asian religious thought was formally done by Joseph Priestley through his biased work, *A Comparison of the Institutions of Moses with those of the Hindoos*. Though not impartial, this work and its author influenced the celebrated thinker and President of America John Adams, who in turn wrote to his successor, Thomas Jefferson, about eastern religions in several of his letters. Joseph Priestley founded Unitarianism, which later on showed tremendous interest in the work of Ram Mohan Roy. Emerson next. He was among the new group called the Transcendentalists, and wrote: 'The East is grand, and makes Europe appear a land of trifles.'⁵ There were a number of staunch indologists beginning with Thoreau, Alcott, Parker, etc in subsequent times. Further, several other writers who wrote either objectively or with a bias about India may be mentioned: James Freeman Clarke's *The Great Religions* (1871), Samuel Johnson's *Oriental Religions and their Relation to Universal Religion* (1872) and Moncure D. Conway's *The Sacred Anthology*. The pre-

cursor of the religious parliament came with the formation of a principally scientific association called the Free Religious Association (FRA) which was drawn to Keshab Chandra Sen. In 1870, this organization demonstrated its universality by holding a convention.

Buddhism was practically unknown in the West till the *Light of Asia* by Edwin Arnold which hit America with a bang. Millions of copies were sold. Scholars were attracted to Indian thought in great numbers as days rolled by. Edward Salisbury was the first professor of Sanskrit in the United States, and his disciple, William Dwight Whitney, one of the greatest. The latter's *Sanskrit Grammar* was welcomed avidly. 'For all practical purposes, Oriental scholarship in nineteenth century America meant Indian scholarship, carried on through the medium of Sanskrit,' says Jackson.⁶

What were the reasons behind American interest in the Orient, specially India? Dale Reipe asks the same question and answers (pp. 273-75) thus: The economic expansionism of the United States from 1812, the disillusionment with the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition, the desire for novelty, discontent with the state of American philosophy and increasing communication between Indian and American intellectuals led to the concern of America for Indian thought. Though this scholar feels so, the most important reason is acceptance. The distinguishing character of this nation is its heterogeneity and universality, some black sheep notwithstanding.

America had vast resources, wealth, prosperity, cultural stability, integrity, military power, national coherence, etc. It progressed at the intellectual plane also and crossed several spectacular milestones. Yet, this was not enough; something more was

4. Ibid., p. 95.

5. Ibid., p. 45.

6. Ibid., p.195.

needed. The body was there and there was also the mind: something more was needed to complete the structure.

The Parliament of Religions

Considering all the developments on the American soil to be Providential, we may call the 150 years or so of interest in Indian thought as preparatory. Then came the greatest miracle of the millennium—the hosting of the religious parliament in Chicago in 1893. This too may be understood as Providential. Dale Reipe writes: 'The United States recognized in some official way the existence of India, for the first time, at the Colombian Exposition opened in Chicago in 1893.'⁷ This 'official recognition' was the attainment of spiritual freedom. America had discovered its body and mind, but not the soul. At the Parliament of Religions, it discovered its soul. What was that soul?

I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "*As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.*"⁸

This was the soul of America: the heterogeneity and harmony of religions. As I said, the physical and intellectual character of this nation is acceptance. In the spiritual field too, it was revealed to this nation that it has to be harmony and acceptance. This glorious revelation came on the very first day of the religious parliament. The revealer?—an unknown

monk from India. Once America knew its soul, it became spiritually free. For, according to Vedanta, it is knowledge of the Self that leads to liberation. America had acquired knowledge of its soul and it became spiritually free. It was now free to practise any faith. The spiritual independence of America brought about a fundamental change in its outlook of the world's religions. Today, Americans accept Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism and many other big and small religions into their fold. This is the trend of the world today: not isolation but broadening; and America was the pioneer. Thus *the first gift of Swami Vivekananda was to reveal to America its soul.*

With all the underplaying of the role of eastern religions, any impartial student will read that the parliament tilted the world's interest from the narrow, sectarian view of religion to that world perspective which declared that 'upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".'⁹ The remarkable person who declared so was Swami Vivekananda.

The Individuals

Coming to the American individuals, during the first 150 years or so before freedom, their life had been one of great conflict and uncertainty. Freedom changed the situation. They found everything: wealth, prosperity, freedom of expression, enjoyments, intellectual pleasures, and so on. However, material prosperity and intellectual wealth need not necessarily lead to moral strength as well as lasting happiness. Something was lacking. Popular religion did not satisfy this nation. The Americans were told to be moral but they did not have a strong philosophy behind being moral. As Will and Ariel Durant wrote in *The Lessons of History*, 'As education

7. Cf. Dale Reipe, *The Philosophy of India and its Impact on American Thought* (Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1970), p. 73.

8. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), Vol. 1, p. 4.

9. Ibid., p. 24.

spreads, theologies lose credence, and receive an external conformity without influence upon conduct or hope. Life and ideas become increasingly secular.... The moral code loses aura and force as its human origin is revealed, and as divine surveillance and sanctions are removed.¹⁰ Americans were told that they were all equal and free, but there was no basic philosophy to make all equal and free. As Erich Fromm writes in *Escape From Freedom*, 'Positive freedom as the realization of the self implies the full affirmation of the uniqueness of the individual.... Positive freedom also implies the principle that there is no higher power than this unique individual self....'¹¹ But the American people understood the self to mean the mind alone. The *Philosophy and the American Heritage* by Johnson Hill and Walter Stuermann studies several aspects of American life and decides that America needs a philosophy to survive. The book quotes T.S. Eliot:

...the more highly industrialized the country, the more easily a materialistic philosophy will flourish in it, and the more deadly that philosophy will be.... And the tendency of unlimited industrialization is to create bodies of men and women—of all classes—detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion—in other words, a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well housed and well disciplined.¹²

With all its glory, a nation without a rich and strong philosophy is doomed to be a mob, while the richest philosophy is that which is based on the strongest, truest founda-

tion—the Atman. Swamiji came. He told the Americans about the Atman. This *Atman was Swamiji's second gift to the United States*. The ideals of morality and equality can be fully appreciated only with the Self being the basis of everything—we have to be moral because we are inherently moral, we are the Atman; we are equal because we are the Atman. Luther's basic postulation was that man is basically evil inside. In such a case, morality is superimposed only, and superimposition is always false—a mask. So, Swami Vivekananda gave a novel idea that the human being is basically divine. His teaching the Americans about the Atman has therefore a great meaning. Speaking about this, Harold W. French wrote: 'The dynamics of the development in the West might be construed as those of a counter-cultural expression: the prevailing understanding of religion is strongly social, with political overtones; therefore the new movement establishes a contrasting identity.'¹³

Thus Swamiji gave two gifts to the West: the soul for the nation and the Self for the individual. There was one more. The American character has a few fundamental specialities: scientific and rational outlook, individualism, practicality and want of a practicable philosophy. They want men of action. During its 200-year history, America had come across several intellectual giants. A spiritual person was wanting. A man of experience was needed. Providence brought Swamiji to this land. Swamiji's glorious life is an inspiration to one and all. Vivekananda was brought up in a predominantly rational and 'western' atmosphere, suited to America. Sri Ramakrishna moulded Narendra into Vivekananda, and this *Vivekananda himself was the third gift*. That brilliant intellect, that superb knowledge, that glowing spirituality, that down-to-earth practicality, that wonderful

10. Will and Ariel Durant, *The Lessons of History* (Geneva: Edito-Service SA, 1968), pp. 92-93.

11. Erich Fromm, *Escape From Freedom* (New York: Avon Books, 1971) pp. 290-91.

12. Cf. Johnson D. Hill and Walter E. Stuermann, *Philosophy and the American Heritage* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), p. 194.

13. Harold W. French, *The Swan's Wide Waters* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1974), p.169.

compassion—could easily be a living ideal for the American, specially the youth.

A 1998 opinion poll gave an astounding reduction in those Americans who could say they were very happy. Today's American elders complain of moral crisis, teen suicides, juvenile crime, divorces, addictions, etc. All these go to show that a strong philosophy and a wonderful life are needed as guides. And that was what Swami Vivekananda provided to that nation: there are seeds; but recognition and following are needed.

Real happiness and real freedom are spiritual, say our saints. Swami Vivekananda sowed the seeds of this real spirituality in the

United States. But why is he not a rage in the West today? A prophet will not have multitudes following him immediately after his advent. However, during these one hundred years after Vivekananda, there is considerable change in many fields. The name is unimportant after all, as he repeatedly insisted, but his ideas are, and they are slowly gaining ground. The aspiration for individuality and freedom in the westerner is answered in Vivekananda's repeated assertion that to be free is the goal of human life. His passing away on the 4th of July reminds Americans, and through them the entire world, that there is need to attain individual spiritual freedom. Otherwise, what great good can political and intellectual freedom bring? □

The Glory of Yoga

Yoga takes a position in regard to the existence of God that is utterly unfamiliar to the European. Patanjali says that if the student is...unable to accept the hypothesis of God, then there are other equally sure paths of approach.... It will suffice here to say that it involves no belittlement of the conception of God and no insincerity of approach to him; but is based rather on the hypothesis that the undisciplined human mind is incapable of grasping or even conceiving the things of the spirit.... Religion in the east is not conceived as personal emotion but partakes of the nature of science, and the scientific approach of the eastern philosopher to a subject which in the west has for so many centuries been regarded as at war with science is one of the many obstacles in the path of mutual understanding between east and west. In...comparing yoga and analytical therapy I am attempting to make a useful contact between one of the most ancient and one of the most modern of these. On the one hand the yoga sutras of Patanjali are not merely an archaic curiosity, and on the other hand analytical therapy is not a wholly new discovery, but is in harmony with the wisdom of an ancient civilization famed for its insight and its profound philosophies.

We need to remember that the eastern theory of mind is far more definite and clear-cut than that of the west.... It is true that playing at yoga has become a fairly common pastime in certain sections of society, but the relation between this play and the true practice of the eastern science is comparable to that between the child who cuts open her sawdust doll to remove its appendix and the surgeon who actually performs...appendectomy.... I am convinced that the yoga sutras of Patanjali do really contain the information that some of the most advanced psychotherapists...are seeking.

—from Geraldine Coster, *Yoga and Western Psychology*

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

Rain Plays Spoilsport

May, 326 BCE. It was a hard time for the great emperor. Alexander had crossed the Jhelum with a small contingent, helped by Ambhi, the first well known traitor of India. Pururava (Porus) sent his son with a troop. The son died in the battle. Porus then fought a valiant battle with a large army. Chariots kept sticking to the wet earth, archers could not fix their long bows to the ground. What was more, the large army lacked proper discipline and training, compared to that of Alexander's. Result? The army of Porus was destroyed. The 6'2" tall hero, Porus, fought till the last. But with several wounds on his person, this great hero left the battlefield in deep anguish. And there! A horseman was seen galloping after him, evidently to capture him. With all the wounds, with energy slowly dying out, with pain all over his gigantic body, Porus was still brave: he would never give up. He threw a sharp javelin at the horseman. The horseman had been none other than the traitor of India, Ambhi. He fell. The rest is known to everyone. Unable to walk any longer, Porus surrendered. Alexander asked him how he wished to be treated. With the spirit of the heroic India at his back, Porus said: 'As a king.' Indeed Alexander was great. He understood the lion in Porus and reinstated him on his throne!

Max Muller Wrote...

'If I were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power, and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth—I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant—I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our own inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.'

The Oldest

Count Bjornstjerna said: 'No nation on earth can vie with the Hindus in respect of the antiquity of their civilization and the antiquity of their religion.'



Swami Vivekananda in Detroit

SUSAN WALTERS

The author, presently engaged in literary research activities at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, gives an exhaustive and spectacular account of Swamiji's experiences in Detroit.

If you look at a map of North America, you will find the five Great Lakes looming over the north-central part of the United States and dividing that country from its northern neighbour, Canada. On the south-western shore of the western-most lake, Lake Michigan, you will find Chicago, Swamiji's city. On the eastern shore of that same lake is the state of Michigan. Detroit, Michigan's largest city, is located across the state on its eastern border on another Great Lake, Lake Erie.

Chicago is a well-known city, at least to devotees of Swami Vivekananda; but what about Detroit?

Detroit had its beginnings in 1701 when Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, the French explorer, established a fort at the 'narrows' (*detroit* in French), the waterway between Lake Huron and Lake Erie. This fort was to become a lucrative fur-trading centre through the united efforts of the local Indians and the first French traders. Later, after many battles for possession of this area between the French and the British, Detroit, by then a city, became the property of neither, but of the newly formed United States.

In the 1880s mining and lumber industries brought wealth and employment opportunities to Michigan's citizens. Detroit, called 'the dynamic city', became the centre of these activities. By 1894 when Swamiji arrived there, Detroit had accumulated enough wealth to make possible the creation of a cultured and educated class of citizens. The city was yet to become famous for its car manufacturing which began fourteen years later, in

1908. Henry Ford's production of the Model T, the first practical, inexpensive automobile, started a transportation revolution that was to change the face of every city in the world. But that was undreamed of when Swamiji arrived there on 13 February 1894.

Swamiji also could not have imagined the battle he would be forced to wage in Detroit against the forces of bigotry and religious dogmatism that were darkening the minds of millions of Americans.

Marie Louise Burke (now Sister Gargi) in her comprehensive work, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, expresses her belief that Swamiji's sojourn in Detroit and neighbouring cities from 13 February to 30 March 1894 'was almost equal in significance to that of the Parliament of Religions.'¹ Still, little had been known of this chapter in Swamiji's American mission until she unearthed the facts hidden in voluminous Detroit newspaper accounts. We will discuss those facts in the following pages.

Hostility to Swamiji

After the closing of the Parliament at the end of September 1893, Swamiji spent some time in Chicago and its vicinity before making a tour of midwest and southern American cities where he lectured and met many different kinds of people. As his message of universal love and the harmony of religions began to attract more and more people, many Chris-

1. Marie Louise Burke (Sister Gargi), *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1988), Vol. 1, p. 287. [Hereafter *New Discoveries*.]

tian ministers, who had already felt threatened by Swamiji's success at the Parliament of Religions, became even more alarmed and 'warned their flocks against the heathen and his false doctrines.'² These ministers were probably in agreement with the editor of a Christian newspaper in Chicago who wrote, 'While in the Parliament, he [Vivekananda] was here as our guest, but now that it is over we ought to make an enthusiastic attack against him and his false doctrines.'³

What was the reason for such bitter attacks?

In my opinion, one reason is that many Christians wholeheartedly believed in the church's dogma that it was only by 'accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour' that one could be sure of salvation, and salvation meant being saved from going to an eternal hell after death and being tortured there throughout eternity. If you really believed that (and many did), you would consider anyone who tried to tell you something different to be an enemy.

There is another reason for the attacks on Swamiji. This was the widely-held belief that the heathens—that is, those having a non-Christian religion—were greatly in need of Christianity to save them from their un-American way of living. But combined with this concern for the souls and living habits of the heathens was a natural desire for adventure. How much more exciting it was to go to some far-off land (such as India) and see the strange sights than to live a boring life in some small American town! This desire for adventure combined with a sincere faith in Christian dogma, prompted any young man or woman who had heard 'the call' for a religious life to become a missionary. (This was largely true among Protestants; religious-minded young Catholics could become nuns or monks.)

So, in addition to throwing doubt on deep-seated beliefs and dogmas, Swamiji was

preventing religious Protestants from virtuously living a life of adventure in exotic lands. These factors created an intense hostility to Swamiji, a hostility which, rumbling intermittently on his lecture tour, became overt and vicious in Detroit.

Two Forces

Besides this hostile force, however, there was a small number of broad-minded and gentle people in Detroit who revered and befriended Swamiji. Sister Gargi speaks of these two contrary forces, the bigoted and the broad-minded, as being symbolized by the howling blizzard that Swamiji encountered on his arrival in Detroit and the contrasting warm reception given him the same evening by Mrs. Bagley.

While the Bagley family gave a warm welcome to Swamiji, the city itself greeted him that night with a blizzard. It was a fitting reception, foreshadowing the antagonism that was to howl around him for the next six weeks. But this was not the only welcome he received, and the other, though in sharp contrast, was equally prophetic. On the evening following his arrival, Mrs. John J. Bagley, one of Detroit's most influential women, who had met Swamiji five months earlier at the Parliament of Religions, honoured him with a gala reception.... Thus here, too, was a foreshadowing of what was to come; for throughout Swamiji's Detroit visit he was feted and championed by many friends who loved and revered him.⁴

Excerpts from an interview with Swamiji printed in the *Free Press* on Wednesday, 14 February, the day after he arrived in Detroit, reveals how he was seen by an impartial observer:

The complacency of the Hindoo god is superlative. Nothing disturbs him; nothing ruffles the infinite calm which rests upon his features; nothing changes the placid conscientiousness of his inner

2. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 289.

3. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 288.

4. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 290.

life....

His personality is charming....the conversation with the representative of the *Free Press* seems especially significant, indicating an entire lack of the missionary spirit in the distinguished visitor. Swami is a person of medium stature, with the dusky complexion common with people of his nationality, gentle in manner, deliberate in movement and extremely courteous in every word, movement and gesture. But the most striking feature of his personality are his eyes, which are of great brilliance....⁵

'Give Us Some Miracles'

This appreciative editorial, representative of the friendly forces, was in stark contrast to a hostile editorial published on the same day by another Detroit paper, the *Evening News*. This editorial entitled 'Give Us Some Miracles', started a minor skirmish in what might be called 'The Battle of Detroit'. We will follow this skirmish to its end before returning to the main part of our narrative.

The editorial quoted some recent magazine articles which told of miracle-working men in India who had performed such tricks as causing rocks and mountains to disappear and then reappear, thunderbolts to leap from their fingers, and large trees to spring up before the spectators' eyes. Then the editorial challenged Swamiji to prove his worth by performing such feats, saying that Swamiji should either 'put up or shut up.'⁶

O.P. Deldoc, who proved to be one of Swamiji's most articulate and consistent supporters through his letters to newspapers, was the first to respond to this vulgar editorial with a letter in the *Journal* of 16 February. He convincingly answered the accusations made in the editorial and concluded his letter with these words:

If Swami Vive Kananda succeeds in expounding a gospel of peace, of purity, of

self-sacrifice and brotherly love; if he succeeds in opening the blind eyes of bigotry, and in unstopping the deaf ears of the intolerant, and shows the professed Christian that even a heathen has some virtues which Christians lack, and more than all if he softens the strong heart of humanity which he already seems qualified to do, his mission among us will not be in vain.⁷

The *Evening News*, the paper which had demanded miracles, to its credit, on 17 February printed an interview with Swamiji in which he was able to lay to rest any claim or desire to work miracles. Swamiji told the reporter that he was no miracle-worker, and the pure Hindu religion was not based on miracles. He said further that the strange tricks done in India are not the work of Hindu wise men, but of magicians. Wise men 'can be seen and known only by those who seek to know the truth, and not [by those] moved by childish curiosity.'⁸

Then, on 20 February, the *Evening News*, won over for the time being to Swamiji's cause, published a brief editorial praising him and ending with these words, 'The *News* appreciates Kananda, not as a popular fad, but because he has come and delighted us with the things that are valuable for their own sake.'⁹

The skirmish over miracles was thus over, with Swamiji the victor. We now return to Wednesday, 14 February, the day after Swamiji arrived in Detroit.

That evening, Swamiji gave his first lecture at the Unitarian Church where he was introduced to the audience by the Methodist Bishop W.X. Ninde. This lecture was the occasion when Christine Greenstidel (later Sister Christine) and her friend Mary Funke saw Swamiji for the first time. Christine has described how Swamiji appeared to her on that cold February night:

7. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 329-30.

8. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 331.

9. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 331.

5. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 298-302.

6. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 325-26.

The power that emanated from this mysterious being was so great that one all but shrank from it. It was overwhelming. It threatened to sweep everything before it.... It was a mind so far transcending other minds, even of those who rank as geniuses, that it seemed different in its very nature. Its ideas were so clear, so powerful, so transcendental that it seemed incredible that they could have emanated from the intellect of a limited human being....

Was it possible to hear and feel this and ever be the same again? All one's values were changed. The seed of spirituality was planted to grow and grow throughout the years until it inevitably reached fruition.¹⁰

If you read Christine's ecstatic account of Swamiji's first lecture, and then read Bishop Ninde's letter to the *Free Press* about it, you will find it difficult to believe that the Bishop and Christine heard the same lecture.

When Bishop Ninde had introduced Swamiji to the audience, he had expressed the hope that 'the heathens would some day see the light.' He had so little tact that he could not understand how offensive these words would be to one of the 'heathen'. Expecting to hear an interesting travelogue on the strange and exotic sights in India, the Bishop had been forced to listen to Swamiji's rejoinder that India was 'morally head and shoulders above the United States,'¹¹ and had no need of Christian missionaries.

This was more than the Bishop could bear to hear. The following day in his letter to the *Free Press* he said, in part:¹²

Imagine my surprise...as the lecture proceeded, when I saw it to be a studied effort to magnify the virtues of the Hindoos and discount the morals of Christian nations,

with the evident purpose of showing the impertinence and uselessness of Christian missions.

Could this be the same lecture that lifted Christine and Mrs. Funke into a purer and rarer atmosphere and planted the seed of spirituality that was to 'grow and grow throughout the years until it inevitably reached fruition'? Even coming in contact with so great a spiritual teacher as Swamiji, a person sees only what he is prepared to see. Bishop Ninde was so blinded by sectarian dogmatism that he could not see the great light that was standing on the platform beside him.

The Battle Begins

The Bishop's letter was the first volley in the battle that was to last the whole time Swamiji was in Detroit, and even after he left. As Sister Gargi has written, 'The war was on. Henceforth the newspapers fairly crackled with letters and editorials attacking and defending Swamiji.'¹³

After Swamiji's second lecture entitled 'Hindu Philosophy', again at the Unitarian Church, the press was not so friendly as it had been, evidently because of Bishop Ninde's position in the city. The *Free Press* and the *Journal* both gave unsympathetic accounts of the lecture. The *Journal* said that 'the whole lecture was made up of pointed little cracks at the Christian religion', while the *Free Press* reporter heard 'cute little jabs at the Christian Religion.'¹⁴

Again, what a contrast to Christine's account of his lectures, all of which she attended: 'We missed no opportunity of hearing him. Again and again we heard the "wondrous Evangel of the Self".'¹⁵

One Detroit newspaper, the *Tribune*, however, gave a true account of this lecture, stating that Swamiji dwelt on some of the principles of the Hindu religion, emphasizing

10. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), pp. 148-50. [Hereafter *Reminiscences*.]

11. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 308.

12. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 311-12.

13. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 313.

14. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 316-17.

15. *Reminiscences*, p. 152.

its acceptance of all creeds. He was quoted as saying that 'Hindus with all their faults and superstitions, never persecute.'¹⁶

In the meantime, at least three persons had responded rationally, forcefully, and at length to Bishop Ninde's attack on Swamiji. Two of these letters were published in the *Free Press* and one in the *Journal*. The writers came to Swamiji's defence with such comments as these:

If Bishop Ninde is going to the orient as a true missionary he will have to learn the chief lesson of 'God in man' before he can truthfully preach the glad tidings of a gospel of peace and love.

The fundamental principle of the Hindoo religion is the absolute tolerance of all other religions and it strikes me that the learned bishop has displayed a great deal of intolerance in advocating his own cause.

Do our missionaries treat foreign—pagan, we like to call them—religions as tenderly and inoffensively as Vive Kananda treated ours? He was not here to convert us; indeed in his last lecture he expressly disclaimed any such purpose.¹⁷

Sister Gargi is of the opinion that these letters defending Swamiji represented the feelings of the great majority of people in Detroit. One proof of this is the ever-increasing number of people who attended his lectures and listened to him with great interest and respect.

On Saturday, 17 February, Swamiji gave his third lecture, 'The Divinity of Man', again at the Unitarian Church to an audience that overflowed the church. Before beginning his lecture, Swamiji said he would like to answer three of the many questions he had been asked in this country: 'Do the people of India throw their children into the jaws of crocodiles? Do they kill themselves beneath the wheels of the juggernaut? Do they burn their

widows with their husbands?'¹⁸

Strangely enough, these were among the most frequent questions Swamiji was asked, people probably having received such reports from returning missionaries.

He answered (*Complete Works*, Vol. 3, p. 498; Vol. 4, p. 201) the first question by saying that they probably gave only female babies to the crocodiles because they were softer and more tender and easier for the crocodiles to chew. The second question he answered by explaining the car festival in Puri and saying that one of the devotees pulling the car may have slipped and fallen under the wheels. That was all. In answer to the third question, he said that some widows voluntarily, and often against the pleas of priests and holy men, entered the fire and burned themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. He then said that people in India never burnt witches.

In the lecture proper, Swamiji told of the Hindu doctrine of the Self, which is infinite. The body and the mind are the mere outer coverings or shell of this divine Self. He concluded his lecture saying that he had no desire to convert Christians to Hinduism. 'Let them be Christians, and let Hindus be Hindus.'

On 18 February the *Tribune* published a thoughtful editorial entitled 'The Hindu Among Us', in which the importance of Swamiji's first three lectures in Detroit was discussed. It emphasized Swamiji's teaching of the value of all religions and the need for the different religions to learn from each other.

The *Tribune* also gave extensive coverage to the Sunday sermons of two religious leaders, one the minister of the Unitarian Church where Swamiji spoke, and the other, Rabbi Grossman of the Temple Beth El. They both quoted Swamiji at length and with approval. Rabbi Grossman, who was to become a staunch friend of Swamiji, said, 'Let us learn from the Hindu that lesson that God lives and

16. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 319.

17. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 321–24.

18. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 334.

reigns, now and ever, that God is in every flower of the field; in every breath of the air; in every throb of our blood.¹⁹

The Battle Continues

Still, the more narrow-minded fundamentalist clergy continued their tirades against Swamiji in their pulpits, as is evidenced by a letter published in the 23 February *Free Press*, signed 'Justitia'. The letter concluded with an appeal to Swamiji:

And yet, Kananda, judge us not all to be so narrow and unfeeling. There are some of us, not many, I am sorry to say, who really try to strip our minds of the dogmas and superstitions that have somehow attached themselves to our faith, and to truly follow the humble and tender teacher of Judea, whose love included the whole world, and all of us extend to you the hand of welcome and of fellowship, and say to you, 'Brother'.²⁰

This letter stimulated more controversy, of which a letter in the *Free Press* is an example. The letter, signed 'Occidental' vilifies Swamiji accusing him of being a 'trickster with facts' and goes on to say that 'Christianity has done more to humanize mankind, wherever founded, than any or all other religions'.²¹

This battle between Swamiji's defenders and his foes continued from day to day. In the meantime he was often invited to the homes of Detroit's liberal and educated citizens, many of whom came to highly revere him. Although he wearied of the vast dinners and the social whirl, he appreciated his new friends and wrote in one of his letters, 'They are very gentlemanly men, and strange to say, an episcopal clergyman & a Jewish Rabbi take great interest in me and eulogize me'.²²

Although Swamiji had intended to stay in Detroit only one week, at the pleading of friends, he stayed to give another public lec-

ture, his fourth, on 'The Love of God'. Every seat in the Unitarian Church was occupied, and many were forced to stand in aisles in order to hear the lecture.

Then on 21 February, in Mrs. Bagley's commodious parlour, he gave one more lecture. Here he finally responded to the many slanderous remarks that had been levelled at him and India during his stay in Detroit. He addressed these words not to his friendly audience, but to the fanatical Christians who would probably read his remarks in the newspapers.

You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. All this prosperity, all this from Christ! Christ would have denied all such heresies.... If you can join these two, this wonderful prosperity with the ideal of Christ, it is well. But if you cannot, better go back to Him and give this up. Better be ready to live in rags with Christ than to live in palaces without Him.²³

Swamiji left Detroit two days later, on 23 February, not expecting to return.

Swamiji's Return to Detroit

Swamiji lectured in small towns in Michigan for about two weeks before being called back to Detroit. After he left that city, the fundamentalist forces were having an unobstructed opportunity to vilify him and his message. The attacks on Swamiji from Detroit pulpits were so vehement and so sustained that it would seem that his work there was going to be completely undone.

The hostile clergy were particularly incensed about Swamiji's claim that India was not an immoral country and did not need missionaries to teach it religion. The rage of the fundamentalists may have been prompted, among other reasons, by the fact that since Swamiji's appearance in America donations to missionary work by American church members had fallen off considerably.

Besides these attacks from the clergy, a missionary organization, The Student Volunteer Missionary Movement, held its interna-

19. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 347-48.

20. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 352.

21. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 354-55.

22. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 364.

23. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 378.

tional convention in Detroit just after Swamiji had left the city. In attendance were over a thousand young prospective missionaries, and featured speakers were active missionaries on leave from their foreign posts. These missionaries of course lauded mission work in India and elsewhere, and undoubtedly painted a dismal picture of the religion and customs of the 'heathen'.

On Swamiji's return to Detroit on 9 March, he met once again the two contrasting forces he had encountered previously. Warmly welcomed by friends he had made there, he had to do battle once again with the Christian fundamentalists. Once more he had to put the record straight on conditions in India, and to counter the unfair criticisms of India made by missionaries and their supporters.

He spoke first at the Detroit Opera House, where he was introduced by one of Detroit's leading citizens, the Hon. T.W. Palmer. This lecture, which Swamiji himself regarded as one of his finest, was given a lengthy and appreciative write-up in the *Evening News*, which said in part:

The merit of the Brahman's utterances last night lay in their clearness. He drew a very sharp line of distinction between christianity and christianity, and told his audience plainly where he himself is a christian in one sense and not a christian in another sense....

Here is a pointer for the missionaries which they cannot afford to ignore. They who would convert the eastern world of paganism must live up to what they preach in contempt for the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them.²⁴

Swamiji spoke next on Monday, 19 March at the Detroit Auditorium on 'Buddhism, the Religion of the Light of Asia'. He told of the life and teachings of Buddha and said, 'Buddha stood head and shoulders above all other men. He was one of whom his

friends or enemies could never say that he drew a breath or ate a crumb of bread but for the good of all.'²⁵

Although this was to be his farewell lecture, he was urged to give one more lecture before leaving the city. This last lecture, given on Saturday, 24 March before a large audience at the Unitarian Church, was to be his only public lecture in Detroit on Indian women. (He had, however, spoken before of this subject to small groups of women at afternoon gatherings in homes.)

According to the *Evening News* of 25 March, Swamiji in this lecture emphasized the fact that in India woman was regarded as a visible manifestation of God; she was expected to be an ideal mother and perfectly chaste.

Swamiji left Detroit the end of March, not to return till 1896 after an absence of almost two years.

Visit in 1896

On Swamiji's 1896 visit to Detroit, he gave the final blow to a remnant of 'the enemy' which had somehow escaped his attention on his previous visit. But, it was now impossible for another battle on the scale of the one he had fought in 1894 to take place. As Sister Gargi says, 'Swamiji's battles had been won and the people of Detroit were fully aware of it. They welcomed him with open arms.'²⁶ The short battle he fought on his arrival in Detroit in 1896 was over almost before it started.

Arriving in Detroit on Thursday, 3 March, Swamiji and his newly acquired companion and devoted follower, J.J. Goodwin, stayed at the Richeileu Hotel where Christine and Mrs. Funke had reserved a suite of rooms for them.

An interview about Swamiji with the Rev. J.M. Thoburn, who had been pastor of a Protestant church in Calcutta, had been printed the day before in the *Evening News*. In

24. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 417-19.

25. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 442.

26. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 4, p. 28.

his interview the Rev. Thoburn challenged Swamiji's very title, saying that no one in Calcutta knew him and that he had borrowed his title, 'Swami', from a Madras monk. His accusations went on in that vein, and he promised to 'preach a sermon on the matter...to open the eyes of the public regarding the character of this man.'²⁷

The day of Swamiji's arrival, the same paper published an even more outrageous editorial, saying:

The Hindoo-Brahma-Buddhistic fad of an effete and rotten orientalism has run its course in the west, and it has been found there is nothing in it.... Kananda has not a thing of value to offer to people trained in Christian modes of thought.²⁸

That evening Swamiji gave a lecture on 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', and the next evening another lecture on the same subject. Both lectures attracted huge crowds and many had to be turned away.

Swamiji's plan had been to have only private classes for earnest aspirants on this stay in Detroit, but his arrival had been publicized, and the room in his hotel suite where he gave his classes were filled to overflowing. However, some who came out of curiosity continued to come out of genuine thirst for the spiritual teaching Swamiji wished to give.

On Sunday, 8 March, Rev. Thoburn delivered the sermon he had promised to give. Its title was innocent enough, 'Comparative Religion'. But his remarks were anything but innocent. The *Tribune* in its account of the sermon gave such quotations as:

The fact is, Hinduism has gone into partnership with sin. No vice is ever rebuked at her altars. 'The brides of Krishna' are 10,000 fallen women.... A pigsty looks artistic under the magic of moonshine, when you are at a safe distance from its odors. Hinduism enamors only those who have never gotten close to it.²⁹

This was too much for the Detroit papers and the Detroit people. The papers now backed away and began to criticize Rev. Thoburn. He had by his outrageous remarks alienated many of the fundamentalists and handed the victory to Swamiji on a silver platter. The battle was now over, and the forces of goodwill and tolerance were the winners.

The *Evening News* now gave coverage to the opinions of Swamiji's friend and supporter of 1894, Rabbi Grossman, who answered Rev. Thoburn's diatribes in a witty and thoughtful rejoinder.

The Rabbi invited Swamiji to speak at his temple the following Sunday. This lecture, 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion' was attended by the largest and most enthusiastic audience of any lecture he had given since his appearance at the Parliament. It received highly favourable reviews in both the *Tribune* and the *Free Press* of 16 March. But perhaps the truest account of that evening's lecture was given by Christine, who was to write:

He rose and poured forth the majestic truths in a voice which completed a beautiful harmony of appearance, voice and message. Not a gesture was there to detract the mind from the intense concentration into which he had plunged his hearers.³⁰

Swamiji left Detroit on 16 March 1896, not to return until July of 1900, and then only for a brief five-day stay.

Visit in 1900

Not much is known about this short visit to Detroit in July of 1900, which was evidently made in order to see the two women who had become his close disciples, Christine Greenstidel and Mary Funke. (Mrs. Bagley had by then passed away.) Crowded and poor as Christine's mother's house was, Swamiji, out of love for Christine, whom he regarded as his daughter, insisted on staying there on this visit. Mrs. Funke later wrote about Swamiji at

27. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 4, p. 14.

28. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 4, pp. 17-18.

29. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 4, pp. 25-26.

30. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 4, p. 44.

this time that he had grown 'so thin, almost ethereal.'

Then she described his loving behaviour with these two disciples:

He prepared for us the most delicious curries. What a lesson to his disciples—the brilliant, the great and learned Vivekananda, ministering to their little wants. He was those times so gentle, so benign. What a legacy of sacred, tender memories has he left us!³¹

When Swamiji left Detroit this time, he took Christine with him to New York where she was to remain for two weeks before he sailed for Europe, then on to India. Later Christine was able to go to India and as Sister Christine do much to further Swamiji's work, especially in the field of women's education.

Swamiji, of course, never returned to Detroit, or to America, passing away on the 4th of July 1902, exactly two years after arriving in Detroit for the last time.

Summary

Sister Gargi in summing up the results of Swamiji's stay in Detroit states that the power he exerted there had subdued the forces of fanatical dogmatism. 'From this time forward few missionaries or clergymen stood up in the pulpits of America and openly made absurd and damning statements in regard to Hinduism, such as had for generations been poisoning the Western mind.'³²

For this, we in America must be eternally grateful. The magnitude and cunning of the forces of ignorance and bigotry that Swamiji battled against for our sakes cannot be exaggerated. And it saddens us to think that besides the verbal abuse Swamiji had to endure, there was at least one attempt on his life. At a dinner party in Detroit as he was about to drink a cup of coffee, Sri Ramakrishna suddenly appeared before him and said, 'Do not drink—it is poisoned.'

But this is only one aspect of what

Swamiji did for Americans. He fought the forces of bigotry and ignorance only in order to bestow on us the great spiritual gifts of India—especially the gift of the concept of the Atman. And he knew we had to have a true picture of what India really is before we would be able to accept and assimilate her gifts. Hence his battles with the missionaries who were poisoning our minds against India.

An Epilogue: Some Reflections on Swamiji's American Mission

The genuine religious nature of most Americans is often forgotten in discussions such as we find in this paper. But it should be remembered that the United States was first settled by Englishmen who were so determined to practise religion in their own way, or as they believed, in the way God guided them, that they left their native England and most of their possessions to make a new home in the inhospitable and unknown wilderness of America. That religious fervour was not completely lost in the years that followed.

The early settlers' commitment to religion and morality was to be given shape in the American Constitution. This document, guaranteeing to all the right of free speech, of religion, of press, etc, expressed a concern for human dignity which can only be called spiritual.

The eminent scholar, Professor Winton Solberg of the University of Illinois, stated in a lecture in Calcutta that 'One cannot comprehend the United States without appreciating the spiritual dimensions of American culture.' In the course of this lecture he mentioned G.K. Chesterton's characterization of America as 'a nation with the soul of a church.'

It must have been these factors—the genuine religious feeling common to many Americans and the spiritual basis of American culture—that made Swamiji spend the greater portion of his life as a spiritual teacher in that country.

Still, while it is true that most Americans were (and are) religious, they were not really

31. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 6, p. 305.

32. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, p. 450.

free religiously and spiritually. They were imprisoned in a narrow and suffocating dogma. They could use their minds everywhere else, but when it came to religion, their minds were supposed to cease functioning; they were expected to accept the dogma of the church uncritically if they were to be saved from eternal perdition. Thus their religion, although it helped them to some extent in living good and moral lives, in the end stunted their emotional and spiritual development. There was too much fear and not enough intellectual freedom in their religion to help them grow into the good and perfect human beings they were meant to become.

Swamiji brought them a religion that was at once intellectually sound, broad enough to accept every different kind of personality, and profound enough to satisfy the deepest urges of the human soul. By bringing to Americans the beautiful truths of Vedanta—the divinity of all creation, the unity of the supreme Soul of the universe and the soul of

man, and God- or Self-realization as the supreme goal of life—he brought peace, harmony and freedom to many bound souls who hadn't even known they were not free.

As Sister Gargi has so aptly said about Swamiji's American mission:

Quite literally he planted the seeds of spirituality deep in the hearts of innumerable human beings, changing the course of their lives forever....

Yes, truly Swamiji was in the fullest sense a prophet sent by God to America. He was a prophet who prepared us to meet the modern age, which not only needs the philosophy of Vedanta to solve its many and complex problems but requires thousands of spiritually awakened people to put that philosophy into practice and make it a living force in the future history of the world.³³ □

33. *New Discoveries*, Vol. 1, pp. 478–79.

A Rare Privilege

While Swami Vivekananda was in Chicago after the Parliament of Religions, he was the guest of the Hale family, who lived on Dearborn. Their house was a block and a half from Lincoln Park, and there Swamiji sometimes went to sit in the sun and open air. A touching and revealing incident took place during these outings. It seems that each day when Swamiji sat in the park, a young woman and a little girl six years old would pass by on their way to the market. One day the woman, no doubt convinced that the young Hindu was kind and trustworthy, asked him if she might leave her child in his charge while she went about her marketing. Swamiji assured her that she might, and thenceforth every morning that they met in the park, Swamiji took the little girl into his care. When the child had grown to fifteen or sixteen, her mother came upon a picture of Swamiji, of whose fame she had by that time learned, and showing it to her daughter, asked, 'Do you remember your friend?' She remembered; for who knowing Swamiji, even at the age of six, could forget? Later, after she had married and moved to Philadelphia, the memory of Swamiji became vivid in her mind, drawing her to spiritual life. She became a student of Swami Akhilananda, led a glorious life, and passed away in 1945. Her name was Mrs. Agnes C. Ewing.

—from Sister Gargi, *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, *New Discoveries*

RELIGION AND LIFE



Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

How do we know if we are proceeding towards God, Maharaj?

Doubts and diffidence in your mind about Him will disappear. You will become steadfast in truth and sympathetic towards others. Attraction for Him will increase, whereas household attractions will wane. These are some of the symptoms of your progress towards God.

How can we believe in God without seeing Him?

Have you seen your great-grandfather? Do you believe your grandfather had a father? Many see their grandfathers, but grandfather's father is unknown to most of us. It is said in the Bible: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.' [St. John, 14.9] In a true devotee, God's nature (*swarūpa*) is manifest to some measure. So, to know about God, one should maintain a regular contact with His devotees.

What actually is meant by God-realization?

God-realization means to know the true nature of God, to experience a close relationship with Him and in the long run, to be transformed into His *bhāva* (nature) itself.

What is knowing God?

'Knowing' means to develop a firm conviction about His real nature and existence; to constantly think of Him uninterruptedly, and to make earnest endeavour so that His qualities may become manifest in us. To 'know' Him means to experience oneness or kinship with Him—to consider Him as one's dear Father, beloved Mother, and so on.

While living in the world and leading a

householder's life, how should we pray to God?

Read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and you will get the answer there. Hold on to God with one hand and, with the other perform your household chores.

We call on Him all right. But, Maharaj, is He listening to our prayers?

He is listening no doubt, but is not answering you. Feeling discontent is good; otherwise, would you have thought about Him? That He is not responding means you are unable to understand or apprehend His reactions. Moreover, what you consider to be good for you may not be good for you at all. He knows best and let Him decide what is good for you—such an attitude is probably the best to follow.

Does He listen to our call? Why can't we understand whether He does or not?

Whether He is listening to you or not cannot be comprehended by you. Do not worry about being correct or incorrect in your calling on Him because, despite all our mistakes, He understands us. Many feel that God is not listening to them probably because they are pronouncing the mantras wrongly. Is He a ghost or an evil spirit that mantras can cast a spell on Him? Does He not realize that you are praying to Him only? When the child cannot utter the word 'Baba' (father) distinctly, does the father fail to understand his call?

Superimposing relationships is necessary at the initial stages so as to progress steadily. To think of holy persons, and to read holy lives—this is keeping holy company; it rubs on you and your mind is guided toward holy ideals. Sri Ramakrishna is a raging fire,

as it were; this fire can light up even a wet piece of wood. Even an insignificant spiritual inclination will increase manifold if He bestows His grace on you.

How to advance towards God?

As you feel more and more that God is your own, and as the purity of your mind increases, you will advance to that extent. God is the embodiment of sanctity and purity; if you can make yourself as sacred and pure as He is, then you can be sure of your progress.

How can we see God?

We say that we wish to see God; but where to go to see Him? We also talk that God is present everywhere, but still we ask, where to go? If only our visual apparatus is cleansed of all dirt, we can see Him. Sri Ramakrishna asked once, 'Does God exist only when the eyes are closed, and cease to exist when the eyes are opened?' [*Gospel*, p. 778.] Now, is He there only when we meditate on Him and is gone when we do not? The whole idea is this: the mind has to be purified first.

Is seeing an avatar the same as seeing God?

Human beings cannot comprehend God fully; but through His incarnation many facets of God can be seen [cf. *Gospel*, pp. 725, 726, etc]. So, the avatar is the window, as it were, to see God. When once you merge with God, all the human limitations get annihilated. Sri Ramakrishna used to speak of 'the mould' (the cast) which is everlasting. The individuality of human beings does not last, but that of an incarnation is lasting.

What methods should one follow to think about God?

I have told you earlier: practising japa, meditation, etc. To think about His attributes—that He is pure, holy, and compassionate towards all. In the main, to love Him is of utmost importance. That apart, as Sri Ramakrishna has advised, repeat His name, sing His glories, live or keep company with His devotees. These are all means by which you

can reach God. The modes of thinking about God vary from person to person. Some prefer the emotional approach. Others may opt for any of the attitudes like the *śānta*, *vātsalya*, *madhura* and so on. Some others may be prone to the analytical approach—he or she may try to understand the intrinsic nature of the universe and about his or her own Self through logic; that eventually gets transformed into thoughts of God. Someone else may follow the path of carrying out various noble and selfless activities; that is, the practice of *niṣkāma karma*, and thus absorb himself in divine thoughts.

Is it He who is getting everything done?

He is getting all things done, you are not doing anything—if you know this, then you need not worry at all. But, 'I am the doer, and He is *also* getting things done'—such a thinking will not do.

How to realize that everything is happening according to His will?

When we shall be able to merge our own will with His completely, only then does the realization dawn in us that everything is happening according to His will, and not before.

Maharaj, isn't that the last stage?

The last stage! The last stage has been described bariously and this is one of those. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Not I, not I. It is Thou! Thou!' You will have to study the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* thoroughly. Also read the *Gospel of the Holy Mother*, the English version of *Māyer Kathā* (Bengali), the lives of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and books on and by his disciples. The problem is, in the biographies of sages and saints, sugar and sand get mixed up and that creates confusion. People like supernatural things, and so in writing biographies such ideas are added in abundance. That is why you should read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* time and again; then, your mind will be ready to discriminate and accept proper ideas.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

SWAMI SRIDHARANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः

संन्यासयोगाद्यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः।

ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले

परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे॥६॥

Vedānta-vijñāna-suniścītārthāḥ

saṁnyāsa-yogād-yatayaḥ śuddhasattvāḥ;

Te brahma-lokeṣu parāntakāle

parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve. (III.ii.6)

Those to whom the entity presented by the Vedantic knowledge has become ascertained, ascetics whose nature is purified through renunciation, at the moment of final departure become identified with the Supreme in the world of Brahmā and are liberated beyond death.

Vedanta is the essence of the Vedas. It is the climax of thought processes of the Vedas, starting from perception to conceptual knowledge, and ultimately ending in *ānanda* of identification with Reality. This Vedanta *vijñāna* is definite in its meaning. It does not remain only at the intellectual level, but transforms the being with the idea of Oneness. Here *vijñāna* means that this person has reached the Essence, as in the words of Sri Ramakrishna, one not only has an intellectual knowledge of milk, but has drunk, assimilated, and become strong. The same is the case with the milk of Upanishadic knowledge. This knowledge is contained in the *mahāvākya*s. This essence of Vedanta is absolutely clear to the aspirant. There is no doubt about this knowledge because he has gone beyond intellectual knowledge into its experience. Intellect can cut both ways, so doubt remains in that domain, but not when his whole being is saturated with that knowledge.

He is also practising *saṁnyāsa yoga* which means total renunciation of the world from the highest to the lowest, from subtle to the gross worldly objects. Sankara says the term *saṁnyāsa* should not be taken only in its institutional sense, but in the form of spirit attained by renouncing all desires of the world, which brings purity of being in its train. *Saṁnyak-nyāsa* or total renunciation means that the mind has been trained in such a manner that there is no further attachment to anything of the world, but only attachment to reach the Atman remains as there cannot be a vacuum in the mind.

Unknown to ourselves, we taint ourselves in various colours and shades, but by the practice of *saṁnyāsa yoga*, giving up of all attachments to the extent of giving up even the idea of attachment, and instead aiming at achieving our true original nature—we clean ourselves and become taintless. The *yati* is one who continues to endeavour to reach the goal he has set for himself, or a person who has total control over himself and can restrain the movement of his mind. He is one who renounces all things of the world, and is thus pure of heart, non-covetous, non-desirous of the world's temptations. When the muddy waters caused by desires in the mind are washed away by fresh water the mind is no longer muddy. The crystal clear mind then allows the Atman within to shine forth. The concept of cleanliness is carried to the level of the psyche. Is the mind tainted by desire of things all around one, or is it free from all expectations from the world? If the mind becomes like a pure bowl of crystal clear water

which is colourless, it will take on the colour of the red or yellow flower put behind it. This is the state of purity of being to be attained.

At the time of death of the body such a person merges with Brahman. He tastes the supreme elixir of *saccidānanda*. He is freed from all bondages. How it is possible to be in the body but not to be bound by it, is explained by Sri Ramakrishna with the example of the dried kernel of a coconut: the coconut is not attached to the shell though contained within it. So the *yuktātmā dhīra puruṣa* knows that though he is contained in the human form, he is really the Atman. Thus he is freed from all bondages and merges into the Reality of the whole universe.

गताः कलाः पञ्चदश प्रतिष्ठा
देवाश्च सर्वे प्रतिदेवतासु।
कर्माणि विज्ञानमयश्च आत्मा
परं व्यये सर्व एकीभवन्ति॥७॥

*Gatāḥ kalāḥ pañcadaśa pratiṣṭhā
devāś-ca sarve prati-devatāsu;*

*Karmāṇi vijñānamayaśca ātmā
parē'vyaye sarva ekibhavanti. (III.ii.7)*

To their sources go the fifteen phases (of the body). Even all the sense organs go to their respective divinities. One's needs (karmas) and the self that consists of the intellect—all become unified with the supreme Imperishable.

A non-liberated person's rebirth is conditioned by the strength of his unfulfilled desires. But how does he transmigrate who has no desires left? Sri Sankara says that a bird flying in the sky leaves no footprints, when a fish swims in water there is no mark left behind. Similarly, no footprints are left behind by the realized souls, ie, transmigration ends for them. With the last breath exhaled he becomes one with the Cosmos.

All that happens is that his body disintegrates, and he becomes one with the supreme, undecaying Brahman. Even in his lifetime his

realization had made him one with Brahman, and now he casts off his container to destroy the last sense of separateness. The *jīva* is supposed to consist of seventeen elements: five organs of sense perception, five organs of action, five life-forces (balancing the functions of the body), the *buddhi* (*antahkaraṇa*) and the ego. He lies down and slowly the fifteen parts or elements, the faculty of vision, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting he lets go. Ultimately, with a long inhaling breath he throws the *prāṇavāyu* out into the Whole. He no longer wants to remain encaged within the body, and wants to taste the unalloyed bliss of oneness with the Absolute. So he slowly withdraws the attachment with these elements. Like a perfect gentleman, whosoever is his servant, he throws out hints to him, that he would like to leave him, as if seeking his permission to leave. In whichever posture he may be, he says, '*Prāṇa*, go back to your source; thank you for what you have done for me.' Slowly his upper and lower limbs and other organs of action are gone as the mind is withdrawn from them. He says to them, as it were, that they have helped him perform his austerities and he is indebted to them. He wishes, he says as it were, that he release them now to go back to their masters. Gradually he stops responding to the five senses of perception, as they are sent back to their sources of light, sound, smell, touch, and taste. As he opens his eyes and looks around to bless everyone, he lets out his final breath. Thus, he pays back to all the gods or principles of the fifteen elements the debt he owes them.

His many karmas which have not borne fruit, that is, those that are not yet *prārabdha* but are his *sañcita* karmas are burnt to ashes by the fire of knowledge. These karmas were performed by the self which is no more, so they have no hold on him. With his last breath he throws out his soul, the *jīvātmā*, merging in the Cosmos including all other beings. It is said that saints and seers do not die but live in the hearts of their devotees. If one has had

the fortune to even see this happen, one can see how pleasant it is to die. We are scared by the physical discomfort and agony of death. But here death has lost its sting as the realized soul takes his leave of his very good friends and attendants and merges in the supreme Self.

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽ-

स्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय।

तथा विद्वान्नामरूपाद्विमुक्तः

परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम्॥८॥

Yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre-

astam gacchanti nāma-rūpe vihāya;

Tathā vidvān-nāma-rūpād-vimuktaḥ

parātparam puruṣamupaiti divyam.

(III.ii.8)

As flowing rivers disappear and become indistinguishable in the ocean by giving up their names and forms, so the illumined soul, being liberated from name and form, attains the highest of the high effulgent Being.

Here is given another description of how the knower of the Self merges with the Cosmos. So far the statements were made from a philosophical angle, now an example of our sense world is being given, on which the teacher's and pupil's viewpoints agree. The examples explain a situation which otherwise goes over our heads, as we are not trained in philosophy.

The rivers are masses of continuously flowing waters contained by two banks. After they mingle with the sea the two banks are no more there. But the quantum of water has not disappeared, for they have mixed in the sea and the individuality of the rivers no more remains. Since the shape defined by the two banks of the rivers is no more there, it is said that their names and forms have disappeared, though the rivers merge into the sea and then disappear. The case is like that of the setting sun, which disappears from our vision but has not gone into the void. Similarly, the form

of the realized soul, the *jīvanmukta* disappears at death, together with the individuality we have imposed on that name and form, but his being remains, though spread over the whole Cosmos. Though he loses his apparently separate identity of name and form, his essence is not lost. At first the consciousness was, 'I am.' Then it became 'I am the Atman.' Finally, it is 'This Atman is Brahman; so, I am Brahman.' The knowing person who has known his true nature is freed from his identity of name and form, but he goes to the sublimest of the sublime.

स यो ह वै तत्परमं ब्रह्म वेद

ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति।

तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं

गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति॥९॥

Sa yo ha vai tat-paramam brahma veda

brahmaiva bhavati nāsyābrahmavit-kule

bhavati;

Tarati śokam tarati pāpmānam

guhā-granthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati.

(III.ii.9)

He, indeed, who knows that supreme Brahman becomes that very Brahman. In his family no one is born who is ignorant of Brahman. He goes beyond grief and sorrow. He rises above sin or aberrations and becoming liberated from the knots of the heart, he becomes immortal.

Compare the departure from the scene of a realized soul with that of one who wants to live, but is being kicked out of the world. In the case of a realized soul it is not death as such, but a process of delimiting oneself, by giving up the concept of individuality. To master death has been the biggest challenge of man since the dawn of his existence. The answer is given here. We want to live an eternal life in this non-eternal frame. But how can two contradictory things coexist? If one wants an eternal life, then he must merge into eternity, for mortal life cannot be turned into the eternal. If anyone is trying to do that, he is, no doubt, ploughing the desert.

By centralizing attention on the goals mentioned in these two verses, we get a description of how a realized soul pays back his debts and walks out of the world in a masterly manner. We are taught how to die, not weeping and wailing, but having a full command on death. Two purposes are served here: one teaches the aspirant how to die; the other describes how a realized soul leaves the house of the body with nine gates, and walks out.

तदेतदृचाऽभ्युक्तम्—

क्रियावन्तः श्रोत्रिया ब्रह्मनिष्ठाः

स्वयं जुह्वत एकार्षिं श्रद्धयन्तः।

तेषामेवैतां ब्रह्मविद्यां वदेत

शिरोव्रतं विधिवद्यैस्तु चीर्णम्॥१०॥

Tad-etad-ṛcābhyuktam—

Kriyāvantaḥ śrotriya brahmaṇiṣṭhāḥ

svayaṁ juhvata ekaṛṣiṁ śraddhayantaḥ;

Teṣāmevaitāṁ brahma-vidyāṁ vadeta

śirovrataṁ vidhivad-yaistu cīrṇam.

(III.ii.10)

This very (doctrine) has been declared in this verse: To them one may declare this knowledge of Brahman who perform the rites, are well-versed in the Vedas, and intent on Brahman they who make oblations, possessing faith, to the *ekarṣi* fire themselves, and again only when the *muṇḍaka* vow has been performed by them according to rule.

तदेतत्सत्यमृषिरङ्गिराः पुरोवाच

नैतदचीर्णव्रतोऽधीते।

नमः परमऋषिभ्यो नमः परमऋषिभ्यः॥११॥

Tad-etat-satyam-ṛṣir-aṅgirāḥ purovāca,

naitadacīrṇa-vratodhīte;

Namaḥ parama-ṛṣibhyo

namaḥ parama-ṛṣibhyaḥ. (III.ii.11)

This is the truth. The seer Angirasa declared it in ancient times. One who has not performed the vow does not study this. Salutations to the great seers. Salutations to the great seers.

The purpose of the study of this Upanishad (*prayojana*) is being given in these man-

tras, which is known as *phala-śruti*. The motivation which forms the incentive to study is to find out how to enjoy this world without becoming a slave to it, due to its temptations and one's desires for them. A time comes when one gets tired of it, and then the Upanishad says that it will take us to a place beyond sorrow and sin, to the place of immortality. The Upanishad calls us to their fund of wisdom, so that we come out of the rut of birth and death, which we have created for ourselves.

Ours is just like the case of the silkworm who spins a cocoon round itself and dies within it. By this wisdom, grief and evil and the knots of the heart will be transcended. Even if we are not yet ready to leave the world, but are prepared to listen and balance the advantages and disadvantages out of intellectual curiosity, the *phala-śruti* should be recited.

The philosophical treatise has come to an end. One who has listened to it without putting his heart into it, but only using his brain, is being prepared for further evolution by the teacher. The teacher says that in his next birth, he will be born with this impulse and would perhaps like to make a go at it. There will be another opportunity to put into practice what he has heard carefully, so that it is brought down from mere *jñāna-gocaratā* to *anubhava-gocaratā*, through the process of trial and error. Even intellectual conviction is then profitable for the student for he will not accept anything but what is advantageous to him. And the process of rebirth will make this unfulfilled desire for the Supreme to fructify.

Upanishadic wisdom, however, should not be thrown about too freely. The ancient teachers faced this dilemma of proclaiming the loftiest truth of Oneness of the universe, and the axiomatic idea that God alone rules the world, that a leaf does not move, the grass does not grow without His will. On the other

hand, the ṛsis also thought of their duty: Should they die with this high philosophy without leaving it to posterity, or should they leave this fund of wisdom to humanity at large? Since they were products of society, they chose the latter alternative. But then, misuse and abuse of wisdom follows. The laziest people say that everything happens by the will of God who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, so this is their excuse for lazing away their lives. To prevent this the teacher makes a qualifying statement. Do not tell this wisdom to anyone who will not understand, has made no honest effort to make himself competent enough to receive this advice. Thus this teaching remained with the people who left their home and spent their life in the *gurukula*. They must qualify themselves adequately to make the best use of these ideas, by translating them into their lives.

Thus these three concluding mantras mention certain basic qualities necessary to qualify for the study of the scriptures. These gems of wisdom should be given only to those who know what is the subject matter; what is

the goal; and why this goal has been chosen from among other goals. The tenth mantra reveals the rule about expounding the knowledge of Brahman to those who are disciplining themselves by practice, are well-versed in the Vedas and devoted to Brahman, and make sacrifices to the fire with faith, and further, to those who have accomplished the vow of holding fire on their heads. If one wants to reach this goal, he must have due respect and reverence and confidence that this goal is achievable and not impossible though it may take a little time. Only he who is full of faith, has control over his senses, has a desire to know it, and is prepared to pay the price for this knowledge—only to him is this wisdom available.

This is the truth the sage Angirasa spoke of in ancient times. One who has not performed the vow should not study this. Adoration to the great seers! Adoration to the great seers! □

(concluded)

Spiritual Teacher Imperative

It is impossible for anyone to learn by himself the art of virtue, although some have used their own experience as a teacher. For acting by one's own inclination, instead of following the advice of those who have succeeded, leads to a high opinion of oneself. For if 'The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise' (*John 5.19*), and the Spirit 'shall not speak of himself,' who can think that he has reached such heights of virtue that he has no need of someone's guidance amid mysteries? In his presumption such a man seems to be more mad than virtuous. Therefore one should listen to those who have themselves experienced the pains and labours of active virtue, and practise it under their guidance, that is, hungry fasting, bitter abstinence, patient vigils, painful kneelings, standing still without moving, constant prayer, unfeigned humility, constant contrition and sighing, wise silence and patience in everything.... Those who strive with all possible effort daily to carry out these practices, will with God's help gather the fruits of their labours at their appointed time.

—St. Gregory of Sinai

Bestow Your Vision on Me...

SRI CHAITANYA

We present a running translation of a splendid hymn in praise of Lord Jagannatha which is full of aspiration of the soul for His vision. The sacred Car Festival of Lord Jagannatha will be held on the 14th of this month. This and the following article are related to this glorious event.

Kadācit-kālindī-
tata-vipina-saṅgīta-karavo
murārī-nārī-
vadana-kamalāsvāda-madhupaḥ;
Rāmā-śambhu-brahmā-
surapati-ganeśārcita-pado
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.

Lord Jagannātha plays His flute on the banks of the river Yamunā often and thrills the vegetation around. He often enraptures the gopis by His divine sport. His feet are always worshipped by Lakṣmī, Śiva, Brahmā, Indra and Ganeśa. May the Lord graciously be visible to me.

Bhuje savye veṇuṁ
śirasi śikhi-pucchaṁ kaṭitaṭe
dukūlaṁ netrānte
sahacara-katākṣaṁ vilasayan;
Sadā śrīmad-vṛndā-
vana-vasati-līlā-paricayo
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.

Lord Jagannātha holds the flute in His left hand, has a peacock feather on his crown, wears golden-coloured robes, and glances compassionately towards all. He sports eternally in the holy land of Vrindāvana, expressing his blissful nature. May such a Lord be gracious to be visible to me.

Mahāmbodhestire
kanaka-rucire nīlaśikhare
vasan prāsādāntaḥ
sahaja-balabhadreṇa balinā;

Subhadrāmadhyasthaḥ
sakala-sura-sevāvasarado
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.

Upon the pretty shores of the great ocean, on the golden Nilācala mountain, in a majestic temple, Lord Jagannātha stands along with His sister Subhadrā in the centre and the powerful brother Balabhadra on the other side of her—only so as to enable the gods to worship Him. May such a Lord be gracious to be visible to me.

Kṛpā-pārāvāraḥ
sajala-jalada-śreṇi-ruciro
rāmā-vāṇī-rāmaḥ
sphuradamala-paṅkerula-mukhaḥ;
Surendrair-ārādhyah
śrutigaṇa-śikhā-gīta-carito
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.

Lord Jagannātha is an ocean of compassion. His colour is blue like the glowing clouds full of water. He is the source of bliss to Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. His face resembles the beautiful lotus in full bloom. He is adored by gods. His glory is sung with devotion by the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. May such a Lord be gracious to be visible to me.

Rathārūḍho gacchan
pathi milita-bhūdeva-patalaiḥ
stuti-prādurbhāvaṁ
prati-padam-upākarnya sadayah;
Dayā-sindhur-bandhuḥ
sakalajagatān sindhu-sutayā

*jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.*

Lord Jagannātha is full of mercy, and is a solace to the world. When He goes on His chariot along the street along with Lakṣmī, He hears the prayers of the multitudes of devotees assembled there and melts in compassion at each step. May such a Lord be gracious to be visible to me.

*Parabrahmā-pīḍaḥ
kuvalaya-dalotphulla-nayano
nivāsī nīlādrau
nīhita-caraṇo'nanta-śirasi;
Rasāmando rādhā-
sarasa-vapurāliṅgana-sukho
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.*

Lord Jagannātha is the ornament of the supreme Brahman; His eyes are like lotus petals in bloom; His home is the Nīlādri mountain; His feet rest on the head of the snake Ananta; His person is an embodiment of prema; He is one with Rādhā. May such a Lord be gracious to be visible to me.

*Na vai yāce rājyaṁ
na ca kanaka-māṇikyā-vibhavaṁ
na yāce'haṁ raṁyāṁ
sakala-jana-kāmyāṁ varavadhūm;*

*Sadā kāle kāle
pramatha-patinā gīta-carito
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.*

I do not want kingship; I do not want gold and wealth; I do not want worldly enjoyment—the most coveted thing of everyone. May Lord Jagannātha, who is praised by Mahādeva eternally, be gracious to bestow His vision on me.

*Hara tvam sanisāraṁ
druta-taram-asāraṁ surapate
hara tvam pāpānāṁ
vitatim-apārāṁ yādava-pate;
Aho dīnānāthaṁ
nīhitam-acalaṁ niścita-padaṁ
jagannāthaḥ svāmī
nayana-pathagāmī bhavatu me.*

O Lord Jagannātha! O God of gods! Please remove the bondage of worldliness from me soon. O King of the Yadus, please dry up the shoreless ocean of sins. Oh! the most sought after treasure—liberation—is manifested here in Your form! O Lord Jagannātha, please be gracious and reveal Yourself to me! □

Swamiji's Simple Nature

During Swamiji's last illness, several devotees accompanied by Holy Mother went from Balaram Bose's house to Belur Math by boat to see him. Holy Mother went upstairs and spoke to her beloved son. Later, Swamiji came down to see off Mother up to the ghat. Owing to ebb tide, the water had lessened in the river and the boat had got stuck in sand. Holy Mother along with her party was made to sit in the boat comfortably. The boatman must have been worried because he alone could not push the boat into the river. Like a young boy, Swamiji, along with the boatman, pushed the boat into the river. Soon other monks came forward to help him. Swamiji also was seen to utter something like 'Glory unto the Guru' as he pushed the boat. It was a wonderful sight to see.

—from *Smritir Aloi Swamiji* (Bengali)

The Car Festival of Lord Jagannātha

SWAMI ACHYUTESHANANDA

Swami Achyuteshananda from Ramakrishna Math, Bhubaneswar, gives a forceful, informative and touching account of the Car Festival (Ratha Yātrā) of Puri.

You cannot fully appreciate the words of Swami Vivekananda that in India, 'it is religion that forms the very core of the national heart,' unless you visit the land that removes all sins (*sarva-pāpahara-deśa*), according to the *Kapila Sainhita* (2.2). It is the land that converts a Caṇḍa Aśoka into a Dharma Aśoka —Aśoka the brute to Aśoka the saint. I am referring to the great emperor Aśoka, the King of Magadha, who converted to Buddhism after the famous Kalinga war. It is a land that culturally vanquishes its conquerors. Here, the ruler has to adopt the religion of the ruled so as to earn their obedience. Even Akbar the Great declared that this country is 'no fit subject for conquest or for schemes of human ambition.' Why is it so? This land 'belongs to gods: from end to end, it is only a pilgrimage.'¹ This, then, is the land we are to speak about now—Orissa, the home of Puri, which in turn is the abode of Lord Jagannātha.

The Hajj of the Hindus

Lord Jagannātha, the most humane and humanized god, is the life-breath of Orissa, and almost inseparable from the daily life of its deeply religious inhabitants. He is their friend, companion, helper in suffering, giver of boons, restorer of peace, and benefactor in every way. What is more, he is the giver of liberation—his sight is said to liberate the soul.² 'In every disaster of Orissa, Jagannātha has borne his share. In every fight of the people against an invading power, he has been their comrade.'

Most of the saints and saviours of humanity—Śaṅkara, Nānak, Kabīr, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Caitanya, and a host of others [including, as some claim, Jesus Christ!]³—have not missed to visit Puri, the spiritual metropolis of India. All of them, specially Śrī Caitanya, have left an indelible imprint on the temple system. We can include the Buddhists too in this list, as they consider Jagannātha as the Buddha. Indrabhūti of the 4th century CE described Lord Jagannātha in his *Jñānasiddhi* (1.1) as follows: '*Praṇipatya jagannātham sarva-jina-varārcitam; sarva-buddha-mayaṁ siddhi-vyāpinam gaganopamam*. I salute Jagannātha, who is adored by all the great monks. He is vast as the sky and is an embodiment of all the Buddhas.' The pantheism of Jagannātha has accepted all and rejected none.

Sri Ramakrishna used to prescribe Jagannātha's *mahāprasāda* as of utmost importance for seekers of God. What is this *mahāprasāda*? It is the sanctified rice, offered to Lord Jagannātha, which never gets sullied. Even a brahmin accepts it from a low-caste person. There is no question at all of this sacred rice being defiled. This rice is dried, kept in containers for days, and a particle of it is eaten daily so that the body, mind and soul of a person is instantly purified. It is called *nirmālya* or *mahāprasāda*. This rice is considered the most sacred food. Sri Ramakrishna had great love for Lord Jagannātha. He has said that his body would have fallen off had he visited Puri. But he never missed a

1. Quoted from Stirling, *Asiatic Research*, Vol. XV, pp. 167, 291.

2. *A History of Orissa*, ed. N.K. Sahu (Delhi: Bharatiya Publishing House, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 5.

chance to pull the chariot of the Lord at Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. He once broke his arm while trying to embrace the Lord in ecstasy.

The famous saying in Sanskrit (from a *Samhitā*), '*Rathe ca vāmanam dr̥ṣṭvā punarjanma na vidyate*,' tells the glory of Jagannātha unequivocally: 'By seeing the Lord on the chariot, one is freed from rebirths.' There is one more saying in the *Nīlamanī* which means that to envision the Lord as seated on his chariot called Nandighoṣa is to envision the veritable Nārāyaṇa himself. This is the firm belief of the Hindus, and for ages now, Jagannātha is attracting devotees from distant places. Visiting Puri is the goal of life, a duty of utmost concern for the devout Hindu. It is like the Hajj pilgrimage for the Muslim. Times have changed recently, and there are better facilities of travel now. But imagine the earlier period! Extreme hardship, endless suffering, constant fear of being looted and killed on the way, the terror of wild animals—undaunted by all these trivialities, devotees flocked the holy city of Puri year after year, specially during the famous Car Festival (Ratha Yātrā). The Car Festival is held on the second day of the bright fortnight in Āṣāḍha (June-July) every year.

The Story Behind

What is this Car Festival, which draws millions—big and small—from everywhere in India and abroad every year? During the last century, this festival was famous in the western world in a negative sense: the Jugger-naut was used to ridicule Hindu religion. Not a little has been spoken against the Lord of Puri by self-seekers. With all that, pilgrims are thronging for a sight of the Lord. What is the idea behind all this?

The legend part of it is this: Lord Jagannātha, along with his elder brother Balabhadra and sister Devī Subhadrā—all riding on separate chariots—visit Guṇḍicā Ghara, the house of Guṇḍicā, situated about three and half kilometres away to the north-west of

the Jagannātha temple. Who is Guṇḍicā? Why is Jagannātha so intimately associated with her that it makes him visit her house each year, as if committed to do so? According to a tradition, Guṇḍicā was the queen of the great altruist king Indradyumna, who, after building the Jagannātha temple, asked the Lord to destroy his family so that none can claim to be the owner of the temple. In fact, Guṇḍicā was responsible for having the images of the holy trinity (Jagannātha, Subhadrā, Balabhadra) half-constructed as worshipped in the temple today. According to the legend, when all the earthly carpenters failed, the celestial carpenter Viśvakarmā came in the guise of an old man and undertook the job of carving the images out of the mysterious log which was received for the purpose. The condition set by him was this: he would take twenty-one days to complete the carving of the images. But it would be done inside the sanctum, behind closed doors, during which period he would not touch food or water. A few days later, as destiny was to be, the sound of chisel and hammer could no longer be heard any more from inside the sanctum. Perturbed at this strange silence, scared that the old man inside might have lost his life due to starvation, the queen ordered the door opened, thus breaking the contract. There the images were half-ready, but the old man had vanished. A divine command was heard: 'God will be worshipped in this form during the present age.'

According to the Oriya work *Sarala Mahābhārata*³ (Musali Parva), Guṇḍicā was the wife of a tribal named Jārā. It was she who actually carved the images out of the holy log. She was worshipping the Lord with great love and devotion.

Whoever Guṇḍicā might be, either the wife of King Indradyumna or the tribal Jārā, her house was the place where the images

3. A great saint of Orissa belonging to a low caste and respected by all as '*śūdrāmuni*', who composed the *Mahābhārata* in Oriya.

were made. Therefore, the Car Festival or the sojourn of the Lord to Gundicā House is considered to be the Lord's 'homecoming' to have a free chat with his own kinsmen, away from the busy schedule and a life of formalities at his 'office', ie the temple.

The Car Festival

Conches blow, trumpets blare forth, gongs sound and cymbals chime, the sound of the joyous cries of people rent the air, the sky above is filled with the ululations of women, millions of pairs of hands are raised above in a gesture of self-surrender, the ocean of humanity tosses itself into waves—up and down, to and fro—singing and dancing in ecstasy—the heavens above and the earth below seem to be thrilled in the bliss of the spiritual vibrations created when Lord Jagannātha ascends His chariot. And the virtual temple of the Lord rolls on along the grand avenue of Puri.

Three wooden chariots are made every year: the making itself begins on *akṣaya-tṛtīyā*. Each chariot comprises thirty-four components. The side deities, the charioteer, horses, pitcher, etc are not renewed every year. Nandighoṣa, the chariot of Lord Jagannātha, is a 13½-metre-high pyramidal structure supported by sixteen wooden wheels and covered by red and yellow cloth. It has got nine subsidiary deities, four horses, and a semi-circular pathway (*parikramā*) around the sanctum which looks like a temple. Tāladhvaja, the chariot of Balabhadra, is decorated in red and green cloth and Devadalanā, the chariot of Devī Subhadrā, is decorated with red and black cloth. The other two chariots resemble Nandighoṣa, though they are a bit smaller in size and are supported by fourteen and twelve wheels respectively.

The process of the Car Festival begins with the festival of *snāna yātra*, the bathing festival of Jagannātha (which was on 28th June this year), and ends with the re-installation of the deities on the golden throne of the main temple after the return car festival

(*bāhudā yātrā*). For fear of increasing the length of my article, I am not going into all the details of the beautiful ceremonies.

The uniqueness of this cycle of celebrations is the switching over of all worship rights of the Lord from the brahmin priests to the priests of an aboriginal community, called *daityapatis*. The brahmin priests perform peripheral activities till they get back to the centre-stage only after the re-installation of the deities in the main temple following the completion of this cycle of celebrations that takes about a month's time.

The bathing festival takes place on the full-moon day of the month of Jyeṣṭha, when each of the deities, Jagannātha, Balabhadra, and Subhadrā, is bathed with 108 pitchers of water. Apparently, though it is seen by the devotee as the Lord's indulgence in water-sport in order to ward off the excessive summer heat, symbolically, it is the washing off of the brahminical traits acquired by the Lord.

Then the deities are taken to *anasara tati*, a thatched construction inside the temple. To the loving devotee, it means that the Lord has fallen sick owing to prolonged indulgence in water. The brahmin priests are not even allowed to see the Lord inside the *anasara tati*. The diet of the deities change to the aborigines' prescription. They have to undergo treatment and also have to put up elaborate make-up for the forthcoming festival. The physicians of the gods are the *daityapatis*. This is followed by the *netra utsava* and *nava youvana darśana*, ie, seeing the Lord in his renewed youth, which takes place on the eighth day, called *rekṣā aṣṭamī*.

It is now the most lonesome period for the 192-foot-high Jagannātha temple (built in the 12th century) and the 20-foot-high Meghanāda wall that encloses about 4,10,000 sq. feet of the temple complex. The whole complex appears desolate as the Lord gets ready to move into the 'virtual temple', waiting outside the campus for Him.

First of all, the weapon of the Lord (Sudarśana), makes his way to the chariot of

Subhadrā, the Devadalanā. Then Balabhadra, who is fair in complexion, representing the white people of the western world, moves into his chariot, the Tāladvaja. Soon, Subhadrā Devī, who by her yellow colour symbolises the 'yellow' people like those of China, Japan, Korea, etc enters her chariot. Finally, Jagannātha, the black-god, symbolising the swarthy races all over the globe including Indians, comes out. The Lord, bereft of hands and feet (*apāṇipādam*), watching the eternal flux endlessly with his lid-less sun-like eyes, rides the Nandighoṣa in the picturesque *Pahandi*—an art component of Odissi dance.

Before the climax of the festival is approached, which is the pulling of the chariots, one more event takes place. It is called the *cerā pahanrā*—the formal act of 'sweeping' of the chariots. The titular king of Puri, the first and foremost servitor of Lord Jagannātha, finds himself fortunate to do the job as per the age-old tradition. Once this sweeping of the chariots is over, the *cāra* or impromptu stairs of the chariots are removed, respective 'horses' fixed to all the chariots and four huge ropes tied to each of the three chariots, making them ready to move on.

Tracing the historicity of the Ratha Yātrā of Lord Jagannātha is a bit difficult. According to the temple chronicle in palm leaves (*mādalā pāñji*), the Car Festival was discontinued several times during the Mohammedan

invasion during the 4th century and other foreign suppressive activities in Puri. The earliest literary evidence of the Car Festival synchronizes with the rule of the Soma dynasty during the 2nd century BCE. A 10th century drama also speaks of the Car Festival. The oldest iconographical evidence of the festival belongs to the period of the Gaṅga dynasty (13th-14th century CE).

Whatever historical evidence might have been lost to us, Lord Jagannātha continues to be the centre around whom the integrity, culture, spiritual life, socio-economic life of Orissa, and also of India to a great extent, revolves even today. The Jagannātha Car Festival remains one of the most important religious festivals of India and its attraction seems only to grow with time.

The Car Festival is a perfect custom which helps universal harmony as it makes all faiths come closer physically, psychologically and culturally. The virtual temple of Lord Jagannātha performs the excellent job of human equality in reality, not superficially. In the words of W.W.Hunter, '...the true source of Jagannatha's undying hold upon the Hindu race consists in the fact that he is the god of the people. As long as his towers rise upon the Puri sands, so long there will be in India a perpetual and visible protest of [*sic*] equality of man before God.'⁴ □

4. *History of Orissa*, p. 6.

Ecology and Ramakrishna

Girish Chandra Sen, a renowned Brahmo Samaj leader and the editor of the Samaj's journals narrates this incident. One day Sri Ramakrishna was passing through a street and saw a man felling a tree with an axe. The master instantly burst into tears, saying, 'My Mother is present in this tree and this axe is striking Her.'

—adapted from *Ramakrishna As We Saw Him*

Veneration of the Guru

SRI SANKARA

A free English rendering of Sri Sankara's hymn to the guru is given here. This and the following two articles are published as an adoration of the guru on the occasion of Guru Purnima, which falls on the 28th of this month.

*Śarīraṁ surūpaṁ sadā rogamuktam
yaśaś-cārutulyaṁ dhanam merutulyam;
Guror-aṅghri-padme manas-cen-na lagnaṁ
tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ tataḥ kiṁ.*

The body may be beautiful and free from ailments. Our fame might have spread far and wide. Our money, if brought together, may equal the height of Mt. Meru. However, if our mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is all this?

*Kalatraṁ dhanam putra-pautrādi sarvaṁ
grhaṁ bāndhavāḥ sarvametadd-hi jātam....*

There may be everything: spouse, wealth, sons, grandsons, etc. But if the mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is all this?

*Śaṅgādi-vedo mukhe śāstra-vidyā
kavitoādi gadyaṁ supadyaṁ karoti....*

We may have learnt the Vedas and their six auxiliaries (*śikṣā, kalpa, vyākaraṇa, nīrukta, chandas, and jyotiṣa*) by heart. We may be born poets. We may have the ability to compose epic poems and write wonderful essays. With all this, if our mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is all this?

*Videśeṣu mānyaḥ svadeśeṣu dhanyaḥ
sadācāravṛtṣu matto na cānyaḥ....*

We may think: 'I am honoured in foreign lands; I am successful and revered in my own. There is no one anywhere near me in good conduct.' However, if our mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is all this?

*Kṣamā-maṇḍale bhūpa-bhūpāla-vṛndaiḥ
sadā sevitaṁ yasya pādāravindam....*

Our feet may be adored constantly by kings and emperors. But if our mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is all this?

*Yaśo me gataṁ dikṣu dāna-pratāpāt
jagadvastu sarvaṁ kare yat-prasādāt....*

Owing to our benevolence, our fame might have spread far and wide—in all directions. All objects and powers of the world may be in our grasp, they being rewards to our virtues. Yet, if our mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is all this?

*Na bhoge na yoge na vā vāji-rājau
na kāntāmukhe naiva vitteṣu cittam....*

Alas! The mind does not dwell constantly either on enjoyment or in contemplation; in wealth or in beauty. It is ever restless. Therefore, if the mind has not surrendered to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is everything else?

*Arāṇye na vā svasya gehe na kārye
na dehe mano vartate me tvanarghye....*

The mind does not constantly dwell either in the forest or in the house; either in our accomplishments or on duties, either in the body or in the valuables. That is, it is ever fluctuating. Therefore, if the mind is not attached to the lotus feet of the guru, of what use is everything else?

*In this and the rest of the stanzas, the last two lines are repetitions of the last two lines of the first stanza.

The Grace of the Guru

SWAMI SATYVIDANANDA

The author, from Ramakrishna Math, Madurai, gives an appealing pen-picture of the grace of the guru in perspective.

The Guru and God

The *Avadhūta Gītā* says that it is through the grace of God alone that human beings acquire the desire to know the Truth (*īśvara-anugrahādeva puṁsām-advaita-vāsanā*). We can overcome the greatest fear and attain the highest knowledge of Advaita only through the grace of God.

Guru and God are non-different: this our scriptures and spiritual teachers repeatedly say. God alone comes in the form of the guru. The guru is the holiest representative of the Divine on earth. He is called the manifest form of the Divine. The guru has no ego of his own. His will and the Divine will are one and the same. Thus, when we speak about the grace of the guru we are invariably talking about that of the Divine: both are non-different. How is it possible? Suppose there is water in an overhead tank. To draw water from it, we use pipes, and the water flows. Shall we say that water comes from the pipe? It cannot be; because the overhead tank is what supplies the water and the pipe is only a conduit. Still, being with the pipe example, we can say that the guru is one who is a clear conduit unlike us, who are conduits filled with incrustations: of various impressions of millions of lives, of millions of desires, of the ego, of selfishness, and so on. The guru is an absolutely pure and holy instrument. Therefore, God's grace can flow through him. God's grace is eternally present, and to the fortunate seeker, it flows through the instrument of the spiritual teacher. The guru is the perfect medium for the grace of God to flow. Sri Ramakrishna says that the wind of God's grace is ever blowing. All we have to do so that our

boat may sail in the right direction is unfurl the sail of our boat. God's grace is unconditional; it may fall directly on us. Nevertheless, we can tangibly feel the grace of God when it flows through the medium of the guru. It is easily had from the guru than through other means. Thus, the grace of God flows through the personality of the guru to us.

Our Upanishads assert that the guru and God are one and the same. In a remarkable mantra, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says: 'He who has supreme devotion to God, and the same devotion to the guru, to such a person alone will all truths be revealed.'¹ Sri Ramakrishna says that *Saccidānanda* alone is the guru. He says that if man in the form of guru awakens our spiritual consciousness, it is God alone who has assumed a human form for our sake. Finally, Sri Ramakrishna instructs us that the guru 'should be regarded as the direct manifestation of God.'²

The Guru Concept

It is generally held that the word 'guru' can be understood as 'remover of darkness'. An unknown source says that the etymological meaning of the root 'gu' means darkness, while 'ru' stands for its remover. Thus the foremost thing to note about the spiritual

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1. *Yasya deve parā bhaktir-
yathā deve tathā gurau;
Tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ
prakāśante mahātmanah.*

—*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.23.

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 292.

teacher is that he is the remover of darkness (*andhakāra*)—the darkness of our hearts. Therefore we pray everyday: 'We salute the guru who bestows sight to one who is blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the light of knowledge.'³ He awakens us from our eons-long sleep and guides us to our destiny, which is oneness with God. The guru is a guide who takes the disciple along the long corridor of life which has many obstacles as gates, and various forms of ego as gatekeepers. With his help, we steer through all these obstacles safely and come face to face with God.

The need of a guru can never be exaggerated. Even to steal one needs an instructor, says Swami Brahmananda. Any science needs instructions and instructors. Much more is it true with spiritual science, as it is a journey towards the Unknown. Without a proper and able guide, we fall at each step and are easily led astray. The guru is one who has journeyed along the path, has known where hazards are, has realized that the Truth is real and ultimate, and has known that others too can reach it. Almost all our scriptures and other literature initiate their discussions with the emphasis on the need of the guru. We learn everything from others; rather, the knowledge that is inside us will forever remain hidden if we do not have external stimuli in the form of various teachers. The mother is our first teacher. Simple acts like eating, walking, talking, and so on need her instructions. What to speak of higher truths? And the instructions on higher truths cannot be given all that easily. It needs a competent and able person who can bear the strain of the herculean task of straightening a dog's tail: the guru has to be so patient as to put up with all our infirmities.

The Importance of Guru in Life

There is one more important reason why

3. *Ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā;
Cakṣurunmilitaṁ yena tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ.*

the guru is needed for spiritual progress. Whatever we do in life has a sense of 'I' in it: we feel that we are the doers. Consciously or unconsciously, this idea of 'I' affects our whole personality. Though we perform spiritual practices with an idea of removing the 'I', it will not be possible for us to eliminate it; on the contrary, without proper guidance, it grows in leaps and bounds. We cannot hope of eliminating the ego from our personality all by ourselves. What is more, we cannot even understand its functioning and know that we are suffering from the ailment called egotism. It is only through the grace of the guru that this can be found out and rectified. It is the guru alone who can eliminate our ego. Hence our scriptures extol the need of service to the spiritual teacher. The guru is easily pleased: a little service and the gracious guru is ready to bestow infinite grace on us. To serve, we need to subdue our ego. While we serve the guru, he sees where our faults are and, imperceptibly, rectifies them and thus is our ego humbled.

One more point. We may perform sadhana all by ourselves, thinking that by repeating the name of God anyone can be liberated. But first of all we cannot perform sadhana properly without guidance. Secondly, we will not know how to overcome obstacles. Thirdly, if we get stuck up somewhere, there is no knowing how we can get out of it. A single slip may cost us our life. Many an aspirant has failed miserably on account of the idea of self-help. There is nothing called self-help in spiritual life. There is only the ideal of self-surrender. He who surrenders is saved. When Swami Virajananda, as a young monk, started meditating between his eyebrows, he had severe health problems—reactions to his spiritual practice. He did not know what caused all this. It was his teacher, the Holy Mother, who could immediately point out to him that his error was in concentrating at the wrong point, and thus he was saved.

There is yet another great danger in spiri-

tual life when we attempt to proceed without the grace of the guru. We may consider hallucinations as visions and feel proud of our spiritual realizations. We can see for ourselves how many people, owing to lack of a proper guru, suffer from mental illnesses—all because of imagining that God is talking to him or her, that some strange sound is heard, or some supernatural light is seen, or some extrasensory perception has influenced their lives. They alone are saved who have a guru who compassionately brushes aside the illusory visions and voices as creations of an eager mind. Sri Ramakrishna beautifully states that human beings are bound by eight fetters and the fetters can be cut asunder only with the help of the guru.

How Guru's Kindness Works

Generally, we consider a person who feeds the hungry, or gives a penny to a beggar, or helps a sick person as compassionate. Is not the work of the guru, who takes us out of darkness, far greater than all these expressions of compassion? There is a beautiful story of Sri Ramakrishna. Four friends wanted to know what was there behind a high wall. One of them climbed up using a ladder and looked inside. As soon as he peeped into the other side of the wall, he laughed aloud, shouted 'Ah! Ah!' and jumped in. He did not wait to tell his friends about what he saw there. The second and third one too did the same thing. However, the last friend was wise. With great difficulty, he restrained himself and climbed down to tell people that behind that wall was a mart of bliss and joy, which had no comparison anywhere. This is the work of the guru. The guru need not bother himself about the world. He need not take the trouble of bending us to shape. Yet he does it out of compassion. Is it not his grace that he gives up his eternal bliss, which he has attained after years of struggle, for the sake of ordinary mortals like us?

The guru does not necessarily get fit dis-

ciples—full of yearning for God, aspiration, devotion, renunciation, and so on. He accepts 'raw' types like us, who are full of follies and errors. With great effort, he patiently corrects us of our mistakes, guides us along the right path, consoles us in our agony, comforts us with sweet words, assures us with his personal experience about higher truths, repeatedly strengthens our faith, and leads us to God. How gracious the guru must be to not only help us in every way but to accept our sins and omissions and commissions and lead us to higher truths!

The Way Guru Guides Us

The guru's grace falls on us, flowers and bears fruit only in an atmosphere of love and mutual trust. There are several conditions for the grace to flow to us, though grace is as it is unconditional. The first is that we should be humble. Water will not collect on a hilltop. It runs down. So also, the grace of the spiritual teacher will not be fruitful in our lives unless we humble ourselves and reduce our ego. This also the guru himself does: he graciously removes our ego by constantly watching our actions and thoughts. A famous verse on the guru says that the *mumukṣu*, the seeker after liberation, should surrender to the lotus feet of the guru who is a knower of Brahman. The rest is done by his grace.⁴

There is another condition for the guru's grace to flow: it is faith. Sri Ramakrishna says that a person does not have to work hard practising sadhana if he has firm faith in his guru's words. He adds that an aspirant does not have to suffer much if he has faith in his spiritual teacher's words. There is a story about a spiritual aspirant who was asked by his guru to water a dead tree. The student faithfully did as he was told, and one day, the

4. *Yo brahmāṇaṁ vidhadhāti pūrvam
yo vai vedāṁśca prahiṇoti tasmai;
Tam ha devaṁ ātma-buddhi-prakāśam
mumukṣur-vai śaraṇamāham prapadye.*

—*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.18.

dead tree sprouted again.

The third condition is opening up. As said in the beginning, the grace of the guru, even as the grace of God, is ever flowing. All we need to do is reduce our ego and open ourselves to receive it. We must open ourselves fully to the guru. It is like the psychologist counselling the neurotic patient: the guru sees through us, and when we open up, it will be easier for him to go to the core of our personality and correct us.

The guru on his part never wants his disciples to be parasites, to always cling to him for help. He wants the disciples to grow

independently. As Sri Ramakrishna said, the guru does everything, but in the end, leaves the disciple to struggle a little. However, many people hold on firmly to the physical form of the guru, thereby bringing pain to him sometimes. He feels constrained and we prevent his grace from working in us. We should not be fanatics in the name of guru-worship. Instead, we must follow his advice carefully and grow. Our growth depends on our struggle and love for the ideal. Love for the ideal increases as our struggle increases. And this struggle is indeed the grace of the guru. □

The Guru Parampara of the Hindus

It is a custom that every Hindu should worship the spiritual teachers who have striven so hard to bring down to us the supreme knowledge of Brahman. Specially on the occasion of Guru Purnima, it is imperative that all of us repeat these two stanzas, remembering all our teachers with gratitude. This is our lineage—the great seers are our forefathers.

*Om namo brahmādibhyo brahma-
vidyā sampradāya-kartṛbhyo
vaṁśa-ṛṣibhyo mahadbhyo
namo gurubhyaḥ.*

I humbly bow down to my supreme spiritual teachers, those great ones beginning from Brahman Himself, who are the sages of our civilization, and who have instituted this glorious tradition of the knowledge of Brahman.

*Nārāyaṇaṁ padmabhavaṁ vasiṣṭhaṁ
śaktiṁ ca tatputra-parāśaraṁ ca;
Vyāsaṁ śukaṁ gauḍapadaṁ mahāntaṁ
govinda-yogīndram-athāśya-śiṣyaṁ.
Śrī śaṅkarācāryaṁ-athāśya padma-
pādaṁ ca hastāmalakaṁ ca śiṣyaṁ;
Taṁ totakaṁ vārtikakāraṁ-anyān-
asmad-gurūn santataṁ-ānato'smi.*

I constantly salute our great teachers beginning from Nārāyaṇa born of the sacred lotus; the sage Vasiṣṭha and his line—Śakti, Parāśara, Vyāsa and Śuka; Gauḍapāda and his disciple Govinda, the great sage; the latter's disciple Śaṅkara, and his followers Padmapāda, Hastāmalaka, Totaka, and Sureśvara, the writer of the *Vārtika*.

The Guru Ideal

BR. SWARUPACHAITANYA

Br. Swarupachaitanya from our Narottam Nagar centre has presented a beautiful study of the guru ideal.

Spiritual ideas are basically highly abstract. They are also very subtle, not easily comprehended by a man of ordinary intellect. Unless and until the ideas are seen to be tangibly manifested in the life and sayings of a person, it is very difficult to understand them in their true sense. Again, an ideal, however grand and ennobling, cannot motivate a person to aspire for it, unless it is seen to be exemplified in someone's life. If a man's life conforms to certain elevating spiritual ideals, then alone can ideals become lively and inspire others.

A spiritually evolved man, who has sincerely aspired to attenuate all worldly passions and bondages so as to achieve spiritual excellence, alone can know the intricacies and pitfalls in the spiritual path. An aspirant, during the initial stages of his spiritual life, is often unaware of his own subconscious tendencies. Only a spiritually evolved man can make him aware of those hidden mental trends and caution him beforehand of the awaiting dangers. Again, he can also channelize the aspirant's progress as per his positive mental trends, which, being present in the aspirant only in the budding state, make it impossible for him to detect them through the process of self-examination.

In the history of religions it is an obvious fact that whenever there has been an upsurge of spirituality, there was always some great personality behind it, whose life and teachings acted as great motivating factors. So, it can be said that it is life alone that kindles life. That is why the guidance of a spiritual preceptor is inevitable in spiritual life.

This fact, that the guidance of a guru is

one of the most essential factors for spiritual progress, has been an established doctrine even during the Vedic period. In the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* we find that there is mention of the student's approaching the guru with utmost reverence and humility in order to attain illumination. 'To realize That (the ultimate Reality), he (the aspirant endowed with discrimination) must approach with sacrificial firewood in his hand the person well versed in the scriptures and established in Brahman.'¹ The guru must not only be well versed in the scriptures, but he must also be a living embodiment of spiritual truths. The disciple must approach such a guru with all humility and reverence. The carrying of sacrificial firewood signifies the aspirant's urge to serve his guru with utmost eagerness and devotion.

In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* it is mentioned that intense devotion to the Lord and equal devotion to the guru are the essential preliminaries for the realization of Truth.² The guru is to be looked upon as the Lord Himself. One must never think of one's guru as an ordinary human being.

In mathematics there is a unique expression which is termed as 'limit'. The limit of an unknown quantity, say x , when x tends to infinity, is equal to infinity. Mathematically,

$$\text{Lt } x = \infty$$

$$x \rightarrow \infty$$

X is actually not equal to infinity. But since it tends to be infinite its value can be considered to be infinite for all practical purposes. May we link this principle to the ideal of guru and

1. *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.12.

2. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 6.23.

say that the guru is God Himself?

Similarly, even when the Lord Himself incarnates on earth, He has to accept the limitations of the human body, viz disease, old age, death, and so on. Then what to speak of a human guru? But in spite of all imperfections pertaining to the human body, if one can contemplate solely on the divine aspect of one's guru, marvellous result is sure to follow. That is why in the *Guru Gītā* it is stated, 'I bow down to the guru who is verily Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara; he is indeed the supreme Brahman.'³

In the *Bhagavadgītā* also the importance of utmost devotion to the guru has been described as one of the vital factors of spiritual unfoldment. 'Know That (the highest Knowledge) through prostration, enquiry and service. The wise ones who have realized the Truth will impart the Knowledge to you.'⁴

In the post-Vedic period Āgamic worship became prevalent. One of the most unique characteristics of Āgamic worship is the selection of a *vigraha*.⁵ Etymologically, *vigraha* means 'to grasp firmly'. Hence *vigraha* means a representation which helps the mind to grasp an abstract idea. Based on a wide range of psychological and emotional tendencies of various aspirants, numerous *vigrahas*, each corresponding to certain psychological and emotional trends, have been conceived. The most appropriate *vigraha* for an aspirant will be the one having a psychological and emotional bent identical to his. This selection of a *vigraha* suitable to the aspirant was made by the guru under whom the disciple served. During a long course of apprenticeship, the guru had ample opportunity of studying the psychological and emotional bent of the disciple and was therefore in a position to select a *vigraha* to suit his specific need. Both the psychological and the emotional bent of the mind are fully subconscious factors, and therefore the subject is not likely to recognize

them himself; hence the specific need of a guru to make the selection. Sri Ramakrishna's mode of initiating his disciples is a unique example of this fact. Sri Ramakrishna did not believe in thrusting doctrines or dogmas into the minds of his young disciples. He led each of them by hand along the path best suited to his taste, temperament and capacity.

In later times, among the various sects of the Śaivas and Śāktas, the concept of guru worship developed to a great extent.

In Kāśmīr Śaivism, there are four means of attaining the supreme Goal, one of which is known as the *śāktopāya*. In the *śāktopāya*, the mental *vikalpas*, that is to say the conceptual determinations, have to be purified before the soul can attain to the *nirvikalpa* illumination. For this purification are needed pure intuition (*sattarka*), knowledge of the right scriptures (*sadāgama*), and a genuine guru (*sadguru*). Getting instruction in the Āgamas from a true guru gives rise to a series of mental *vikalpas* of a same nature (*sajātiya vikalpa*). This is *sattarka* and is the gateway to *nirvikalpa* illumination (that is to say, free from *vikalpa* or conceptual determination), because mental *vikalpas* of the same nature form a step towards realization of the identity of the individual with the ultimate Reality.⁶

In Vīraśaivism practised in Karnataka specially, the guru has been given the first place among the *aṣṭāvaraṇas*, that is to say, the eight shields that protect the devotee from nescience, and guide him safely to final beatitude. The guru is the spiritual and religious guide who initiates the novice into the Vīraśaiva faith with due form. It is the guru who, by initiation, ushers the devotee into the second or spiritual birth, as it were. It is he who gives the devotee real insight into the principles of the Liṅgāyāta tradition, explains the inner meaning of the practices, and guides

3. *Guru Gītā*, 26.

4. *Bhagavadgītā*, 4.34.

5. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, ed. Haridas Bhattacharya (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1969), Vol. 4, p. 457.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

him on the path of righteousness. Since the guru has gained firsthand knowledge of God and the world by experience, the devotee finds great delight in serving and imitating him, and in acquiring knowledge from him.

There are two other categories among the *aṣṭāvaraṇas* which are also related to the guru. They are *pādodaka* and *prasāda*. *Pādodaka* and *prasāda* are water and food made holy by the touch, sight or wish (*saṅkalpa*) of the guru, which in turn create a divine aura (*cidrasa*) in the devotee. Apart from this occult meaning, *pādodaka* and *prasāda* have a simple social significance. In the presence of the guru all devotees, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, age and sex, are considered equal; and all partake of the same food and water, thus suggesting a fraternal bond which is a very vital factor in communal solidarity.⁷

In Tantra, reverence to the guru and initiation (*dīkṣā*) are of vital importance. A good teacher is defined as a man who has his senses under control and has a peaceful mind. He should know the true meaning of the Tantras and other scriptures, always be doing good to others, and be engaged in the repetition of God's name, worship and meditation. The disciple in turn should always be willing to sacrifice his own interests in the discharge of his duties to the teacher, and be ever ready to serve him in all humility. The disciple should always bear in mind that his teacher is immortal. This does not mean that the human teacher is so; he is the channel through which the grace of God descends. The position of the human teacher is one of great responsibility, which does not end with initiation. He has to look after his disciples' welfare in every respect and guide them. The mode of initiation is not in every case the same and varies according to the competency of the disciple. The ordinary mode of initiation is called *kriyā dīkṣā*. This is an elaborate process consisting of many rituals. Men of higher competency are initiated by other methods. The initiation

which is quickest and most effective is called *vedha dīkṣā*. A person initiated according to this method realizes at once the oneness of his own self with that of his teacher, the mantra and the deity.⁸

In the teachings of Maharashtra saints like Jñāneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram and Ramdas, the guru has been highly extolled. According to them the aspirant must be initiated into the mysteries of spiritual life only by a master who has realized God. Initiation forms the first step in spiritual life. God cannot be realized merely by strenuous independent thinking, or by mastering various sciences. Enlightenment is impossible without a guru. Trees bear flowers and fruits only when spring sets in, devotion bears fruit only when one is blessed by a guru. The grace of the master neutralizes the poison of sense pleasures and leads the disciple gradually to ecstatic bliss.

Following the *Bhāgavata* view the Maharashtra saints conceive devotion as nine-fold, of which *ātma-nivedana* or self-surrender—the entire committal of oneself to God—is the highest kind of devotion. It consists of the realization of the unity and identity of one's self with God by service to and grace of the guru.⁹

Though throughout Indian history evidence of guru-worship is found in abundance, exactly when guru-worship started is not known. However, in spite of lack of proper historical records, it is Veda Vyasa who is considered to be the first and foremost preceptor of humankind. The subtle philosophy of the Vedas and Upaniṣads was propagated among the common masses by Vyasa through various outstanding literary works, the most common of which are the Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata*. Vyasa had not only categorized the Vedas into four divisions but had also composed the *Mahābhārata* and various Purāṇas to broadcast the Vedic lore to the

8. Ibid., pp. 244-45.

9. Ibid., pp. 370-71.

7. Ibid., p. 102.

people at large. In fact, the four Vedas became complete with the fifth, namely the *Mahābhārata*. He is considered to be the universal preceptor for this stupendous task which was intended for the welfare of humankind in general. That is why the full-moon day of the month of Āṣāḍha (*āṣāḍha pūrṇimā*) on which Vyasa was born is observed as Guru Pūrṇimā—the day of worship of the guru. This day is considered to be very auspicious by devotees.

The spiritual heritage passes from generation to generation through the succession of gurus. Though the underlying principles pertaining to the spiritual domain remains

the same, the paths and practices go on modifying with the passage of time, as per the need of the concerned age. A particular generation derives the cumulative wisdom acquired through the ages, adds something new to it and passes it on to the future generations. Thus the spiritual evolution of any specific generation in one lifetime is the culmination of each and every evolutionary step of all the preceding generations. The genetic principle 'ontogeny repeats phylogeny' can thus be applied to the realm of spiritual ideas. Thus the quest after the Infinite goes on through eternity in an infinite number of ways. □

'What Powers Do You Have?'

Swami Adbhutanandaji quotes the following incident. Adhar Chandra Sen was a deputy magistrate and was an able administrator. He was also an admirer of Sri Ramakrishna. He often held festivals in his house and invited a number of devotees and fed them. His mother would send fruits, specially mangoes in off-season, to Sri Ramakrishna. Adhar would visit Dakshineswar almost every day, even bringing his food with him. However, the day's hard work would tire him, and he would fall asleep at Dakshineswar. Some people criticized him in front of Ramakrishna, but the latter said, 'What do you people know? This is the Divine Mother's place. It is the abode of peace. Instead of engaging in worldly talk, he sleeps. That is all right.' One day Adhar asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'What powers do you have?' Ramakrishna laughed and replied, 'By the grace of the Mother, I have the power to lull to sleep those very deputy magistrates who are feared and respected by many others.'

The sad part of Adhar's story was that he was warned by Sri Ramakrishna not to ride on horseback, but he did not listen and was killed by being thrown from a horse.

—adapted from *Ramakrishna As We Saw Him*



The Holy Queen

'Mom, where are we going?' asked the child. Tears rolled down her cheeks: 'Where God leads us, my child,' she said. People silently watched from inside their houses. They were helpless. There was the royal proclamation; what could they do? Spies followed her like hounds. The soft feet of her son, never given to hardship, were treading the night's cold streets. Her son and daughter, the prince and princess, and she herself, the Queen, were humiliated thus today!

As chill winds blew, she shuddered. More worried she was for her children. The three, with a baby in her most trusted attendant's arms, walked in darkness. Elizabeth's mind wandered to her old days. What a wonderful life it had been! How ardently had her father loved her! She had heard so many stories of saints and about God while at her father's. Several times was the Bible read to her. Things changed with her betrothal. Hermann, her father-in-law, had heard at Thuringia a year before her birth: 'The star that will rise soon in Hungary will be so brilliant that your country will dazzle with its glow.' He came. She was four years old when betrothed to Louis IV.

Elizabeth's thoughts were disturbed by people's sympathetic words, coming out of the dark houses. A woman's voice weepingly said: 'Live long, Mother Elizabeth!' Even in her adversity, Elizabeth smiled. Why was she to live long in this horrible world? Her only concern since childhood was God. Her only interest lay in serving the poor and the miserable. When she came over to her father-in-law's, how tenderly had he looked after her! She herself was different. Though a princess betrothed to the future king of a great land, she loved simplicity. She hated pomp and was ever keen on fasts and vigils, and that was one reason why she was hated by her

future mother-in-law and sister-in-law. Agnes, Louis' sister, was so against Elizabeth that she tried several means to spoil the relation. Elizabeth would go out often and, though a princess, would serve the poor with her own hands. It was almost her daily routine to help the distressed. 'Beggars, wretches and discarded idiots are your company! You are not fit to be Louis' wife!' Agnes would cry. One day, when her stern would-be mother-in-law Sophia ordered her to dress well, she had to obey. The crown, however, was the problem. In her room was the big picture of the Lord on the cross. Elizabeth saw. The Lord's head had a crown of thorns. The very thought that He should have a crown of thorns while she would wear a golden one burned her heart. The tender girl sat weeping profusely. Sophia came and saw her dishevelled. 'What princess are you? A crown appears to be heavy to you and you sit weeping in this state! How can our palace and country have such a one as queen?' Elizabeth endured everything silently. However, when Louis returned from his studies, the marriage was consummated.

It was getting darker and colder as the night passed. The younger one was weeping. The attendant said, 'Madam, I don't think we can continue this way any longer.' Elizabeth requested a shopkeeper: 'Sir, we are orphans of God. Can you shelter my children, attendant, and myself for the night?' The shopkeeper was an old man. He dared defy the royal decree. He took her in and showed her into a pen. Palace or pen—the children wanted some shelter and both slept. Elizabeth prayed and thought of the stunning changes in her life!

After marriage, her service to the poor had continued. Her compassion had no bounds. Even Louis did not understand her

initially, but one incident changed him totally. One day, as she walked towards the assembled poor and started distributing bread, clothing and so on, she heard some noise. What a surprise! The king himself was there with his entourage. Elizabeth bowed before her husband. She had nothing to offer him. Suddenly, the loaf of bread in her hand turned into roses. That was enough proof of her sanctity. Louis never stopped her any more.

Elizabeth built a big hospital and orphanage near the palace. She became a mother to her people, specially the distressed. She would herself serve the lepers and the sick, feeding them, consoling them, caring for them and teaching them about God.

Had Louis been here now! Had he seen his children and dear wife in such a state! What a devout husband Louis had been! How noble! He would go away many a time to fight enemies. During such periods Elizabeth, who ruled the country, would wear simple garments, conduct her work efficiently, and also pray day and night. It was at one such period that famine struck the country. Elizabeth prayed hard and decided to use the palace's coffers to feed her people. She herself worked day and night to see that the poor did not starve. This incensed Sophia. Enemies increased—the greatest of them being Henry, Louis' brother. He and his mother conspired. When things were reported with all fabrication to Louis, he only laughed: 'She has done the right thing,' he said. Henry never slept well since then. He wanted to avenge this. The opportunity came soon.

The Lord tests His devotees in several ways. The sixth crusade called the pious Louis. Elizabeth saw him off with a heavy heart. The news came that the ship was taken over by plague. Elizabeth had only one refuge—prayer. But the Lord's will was done, and the disastrous news came: Louis had died. The people had Elizabeth only as their solace now. Henry snatched the opportunity. His mother too helped him much in this. The cruel man accused the mourning Elizabeth that she had squandered royal money and

emptied the coffers. Thus, that evening, he had mercilessly driven the godly Elizabeth with her two children out.

Born in 1207, leaving her father's kingdom in 1211, marrying Louis in 1220, Elizabeth was on the streets today, just eight years after her marriage. She prayed all night. God showed her the way and that was a new way. As the first rays of the sun touched Thuringia, a new life had begun for her. She thanked the shopkeeper profusely. The young son cried, 'Mom, I feel hungry.' Elizabeth had her last ornament sold and eatables brought. Her next move was to go to her uncle, the Bishop of Bamberg. Stunned at the developments, the Bishop instantly sent the children to relatives' places. Elizabeth was alone now. Like a nun, she concentrated on her beloved Jesus, and lived in abject poverty.

Things never remain the same. Henry's atrocities could not be tolerated any longer. There was a revolt. Henry was terrified. He understood his folly and ran to Elizabeth. 'Please return to the palace,' he begged her. Upon repeated requests, Elizabeth agreed, but on one condition: her lifestyle would not change. She lived like a poor nun for some days but could not live there for long: she had a different calling.

Marburg! The Queen took leave of everyone and went away, seeking a solitary life at Marburg. She wished to receive monastic vows, but her spiritual director, Konrad, dissuaded her. Elizabeth had a hospice built and she herself lived in a hut near by. Marburg marvelled at her austerities. Konrad's extreme steps told on the delicate health of Elizabeth. Her vigils, fasts, poor diet, hard work, untold suffering—all contributed to her ill-health. But there was peace. The heart had achieved its end. The Lord was pleased with His child. The world came to know that even though a queen, this one was a queen of a different sort—a child of God.

The end came on 17 November 1231 at the tender age of 24. Elizabeth was canonized within five years of her passing. Thus did the Church pay its tribute to one of the sweetest flowers born within its fold. □

Reviews and Notices

SPIRITUAL CULTURE IN THE CORPORATE DRAMA: By N.H. Athreya. Published by Vijay Foundation, 16 Temple Road, Jayalakshmi Puram, Mysore 570012. Pp. xvi+126. Rs.127.

There was a time, not so long ago, when 'Japanese Management', Kaizen and TQM, were the rage in management theory in the West and, inevitably, in India. These practices had worked wonders for Japan and were expected to do the same elsewhere. Unfortunately, the expected miracle did not materialize. This failure emphasized the hidden cultural factors that underlie management practices—what works for Japan may not work very well for USA or India. Attention was now focused on a home-grown management philosophy based on Indian spiritual and cultural traditions. The so-called 'Indian Management' movement now includes luminaries like Swami Jitamananda, who has written the Foreword for this volume, and Prof. S.K. Chakraborty, who has been assertively propounding his version in management colleges, in the media, and in corporate circles. The volume under review is another addition to the 'Indian Management' genre.

The first thing which strikes the reader is the unique format of the book—it reads like a poem! However, it is not meant to be poetry. The author, an acknowledged expert on skilful reading, has found it advantageous to use this format as it makes reading faster and comprehension easier.

The book is organized into eight sections. Section I orients us to the 'on-stage reality' and acquaints the reader with the drama motif which underlies the whole book. The corporate workplace is a stage and all workers are actors while customers form the audience. The aim is to perform to the satisfaction of customers. The culture which aims at and enables the firm to achieve this goal is termed 'on-stage culture'.

I will do all that I need to do,
I will do all that I can do.
So help me God.
When that stand obtains,
we have on-stage culture.

The organization must do its best to facilitate an excellent on-stage performance, the team members must assist each other, and the individual role-holder, the most important component of all, must persistently aim at role-excellence. Here the author identifies four disciplines and elaborates on

this theme in the four succeeding sections.

The Insist Discipline: Consumers must collectively insist on their 'due' in terms of quality, quantity, delivery, and price—this will call forth the best from the competing firms. The lack of adequate consumer rights awareness and protection often makes the individual consumer hesitate to take on powerful business houses. The solution is to do it collectively; '...we can go in for group insistence instead of individual insistence.'

The Assist Discipline: The team should aim at mutual support to generate a synergy which would ultimately deliver the best to the customer. Athreya suggests that team members should respect every role, understand each of them, know and handle the constraints, and salute and cherish every role-holder.

The Consist Discipline: The organization's policy will be to provide 'nothing but the best for the customer' and demand 'nothing but the best from the supplier'. First, of course, role clarity must be ensured through precise job definition, the role-holder must be prepared and trained for role-excellence, the corporate climate should reward excellence and chart a path of growth for the role-holders' future growth. Organizations make rules to check mishaps, about what *should not* happen, whereas it is more important to have guidelines to assist and ensure what *should* happen.

The Persist Discipline: The role-holder is the essential component of the on-stage culture. His attitude should be:

I will not let down
the audience or the troupe.
Above all, I will not
let myself down.

Athreya lists several 'belief blocks' that suffocate role-excellence: 'I am doing you a favour,' 'he is not my man,' 'life is cash quid pro,' and 'survival of the fittest and fattest.' A powerful remedy is a serious study of the lives of practitioners of excellence. Here, the author makes a strong case against the exclusion of spirituality from the Indian work culture.

Following the West...
we have made
an unnatural watertight compartment.
We have said that
this spiritual reality should be
kept out of the doors of the workplace.
In personal life, some of us at least
accept the spiritual reality and
therefore the spiritual culture.
In corporate life,

we tend to deny this reality
and pooh-pooh this culture.

The workplace must be spiritualized assertively: 'Spirituality can be assertive. If stupidity can be assertive, why not spirituality?' At the crux of the paradigmatic shift which 'Indian Management' aims at lies the traditional Indian work ethic: karma yoga.

Section VI deals with the caring, sharing, loving, serving, and sacrificing components of a spiritualized workplace.

The author has added a set of breathing and awareness exercises in the Appendix which enhances the value of this book.

Br. Biswarup

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**SERVANT OF GOD, SWAMI RAMDAS: By
Susunaga Weeraperuma. Published by
Motilal Banarsidass, 41-1A Bungalow
Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 110007.
1998. Pp. xvi+257. Rs.150.**

It is a fact verified over the ages that personages* with a divine mission have Saraswati seated on their tongues and Ganesha on their pens, enabling them to produce a literature as rich and inspiring as their lives. The epics of Vyasa and Valmiki, the teachings of Christ and Prophet Muhammad, the *prasanna-ganibhira bhāṣyas* of Sri Sankara, the poetry of the medieval Indian saints and the colloquial sayings of Sri Ramakrishna—all these, as well as numerous other works, bear testimony to this fact. It is with this body of literature that the works of Swami Ramdas are classed.

In a brief but very apt introduction to his selections from Swami Ramdas' writings titled *Servant of God*, Susunaga Weeraperuma has succinctly summed up the essential features of the swami: 'Swami Ramdas was not only an extraordinary spiritual master but also a master of the English language. He wrote with such style, precision and rare insight that his books are among the great classics of sacred literature. His elegant prose is replete with colourful metaphors and lovely phrases....'

The author has been eminently successful in culling some priceless pieces from the several volumes produced by Swami Ramdas and in putting them into a handy volume of about 260 pages. Each piece (termed chapter by the author) provides enough material for deep contemplation. A representative range of spiritual topics has been covered. The chapters provide fairly detailed in-

structions for beginners, indicate different stages in the spiritual journey of the aspirant, discuss core spiritual issues like faith and grace, and also reveal the dizzy heights reached by an advanced aspirant. In fact, each chapter is fresh with the genuine outpourings of an ecstatic soul.

The biographical essay at the beginning of the book provides a useful introduction to the life of Swami Ramdas. It will be helpful especially to those unacquainted with his life and teachings. The chapter headings arranged in alphabetical order (there could arguably be better ways of arranging them) also serve as a useful index. The publishers, true to their reputation, have ensured error-free publication. The fairly large margin space, however, leaves scope for making the book even more compact—a feature likely to be appreciated especially by those who wish to use it as a handbook for daily reading.

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**THE KINGSHIP OF SELF-CONTROL: By
William George Jordan. Published by
Healing Books, 887/5 Street No. 6-A,
Patel Nagar, Gurgaon 122001. 1997.
Pp. vii+88. Rs.45.**

This book aims at making a human being a king—in total control of himself. The author says that every individual is a marvel of unknown and unrealized possibilities. By exercising control over oneself, which is the ability and power that differentiates man from the lower animals, one can be transformed into a king.

The following are the ways suggested by the author to achieve this:

1. Daily exercises in moral discipline, like doing the things which one may not like to do.
2. Regular self-analysis and an attempt to master the weaker elements in oneself.
3. Control over speech, by abstaining from uttering words of unkindness, anger, malice, envy, bitterness, gossip, harsh criticism, and lying.
4. Working in a spirit of worship. Love of work transmutes all duties into privileges, all responsibilities into joy.
5. Knowing that success is a matter of simple, clearly defined laws; of the development of mental essentials, of tireless energy and concentration, of constant payment of the price.
6. The necessity of day-to-day living; each day may be set in harmony with the future.
7. Accepting full responsibility of our lives.
8. Striving to eliminate pride, passion, personal

feelings and pettiness from our mind so that higher, purer emotions will rush in.

9. Seeking to draw out the latent good in others, rather than to discover hidden evil.

10. To give up worrying; worry paralyzes thought and action.

11. Becoming simple. Simplicity is the elimination of the non-essential in all things. It cuts off waste and intensifies concentration. One can cultivate simplicity by living in harmony with one's own conscience and ideals.

Thus, the author has given the gist of spiritual living. Following these simple principles, life can be raised to its maximum glory and as suggested by the author himself, the Angel of Reserve Power will walk by our side and will even divide the waters of the sea of sorrow and trial, so that we may walk through it safely. This is a very inspiring and illuminating publication indeed.

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SINDHI SUFI LITERATURE IN INDEPENDENT INDIA: By S.L. Gajwani. Published by Sindhi Academy, A-603 UNESCO Associations Apartments, Behind Patpar Ganj Bus Depot, Delhi 110092. 1998. Pp. iv+68. Rs.80.

The word 'Sufi' derives from the word 'suf' which means 'undyed wool'. Those who wore garments made of it came to be known as Sufis in Persia. Early Muslim ascetics attired in *suf* were well known for their pious nature and extrasensory powers. They based their tenets on the mystical verses of the Koran and on the *Hadith*. But as Sufism developed from the 8th century onward it assimilated various ideas, attitudes and practices of Christianity, Buddhism, Neo-Platonism and Hinduism, particularly those of the Yoga and Vedanta schools of philosophy. The Sufi orders laid emphasis on the oneness of God, universal brotherhood, and social equality. They believed in experiencing the supreme Reality (*haqiqat*) by annihilating the self (*fana*) through righteous living characterized by renunciation, patience (*sabr*), repentance (*tauba*), abstinence, contentment (*tawakkul*), poverty, and complete surrender to the Divine Will. The disciple (*murid*) was required to have full faith in the spiritual preceptor (*murshid*) and he realized the unity of the phenomenal and noumenal existence (*wahdat-al wujud*) through successive stages in a *khanqah* or abode of a Sufi saint.

The growth of Sufism in India began with Al

Hujwiri (CE 1088), author of *Kashf-ul Mahjub*. But it was during the 13th and 14th centuries that the Sufi doctrine gained strength and drew both Hindus and Muslims to its fold. Among the prominent Sufi *silsilah* were Suhrawardi, Chishti, Firdausi, Qadiri, Shattari, Qalandari and Rishi. Each Sufi order had a *murshid* and a set of rituals and practices which sometimes differed from their counterparts.

Sufism in Sind (now in Pakistan) spread with Shah Karim whose inspiration came from a Vaishnava saint of Gujarat. He was enamoured of the mystical aspects of the cosmophonic sound 'Om'. Shah Inayat and Shah Abdul Latif were two other medieval Sufi saints of Sind, well known for their universal outlook. The former was scaffolded for his iconoclastic view that the supreme Reality could not be the monopoly of a particular sect.

Sindhis are conscious of their 'precious Sufistic heritage'. They recite the devotional songs of Bedil, Bekas, Rohal and Qutab with unswerving devotion, celebrate the anniversaries of Sufi saints like Qalandar Lal Shahbaz, Sai Qutab Ali Shah, Sai Rochal Das Sahib, Hazrat Sai Hadi Baksh and others and study Sufi literature in the hope that they will attain to spiritual bliss.

This book conveys the spirit of Sufism and dilates on Sindhi Sufi literature in independent India. The author rightly points out that 'Sufism in Sind was not a cult or a sect or a religion or a school of thought followed by a select few; it was the spirit and way of life that influenced people irrespective of caste, creed or religion.'

While Sufism is often painted as a 'Muslim sect or an Islamic faith' and Vedanta as a Hindu school of thought, Sindhis regard both as identical.

Some of the Sufi saints of Sind were poets; some others were not. But they all reiterated truth in terms of their milieu and showed the way to the Divine. 'It is likely that the saints or the evolved souls at present might not choose the style of Shah Sahib (Abdul Latif) or Sachal Sarmast but prefer a style which according to their wise judgement would be the most effective tool in the existing conditions for the mission they have before them,' says the author.

The book classifies Sindhi Sufi literature in India since independence into five categories: The first category includes reprints of pre-1947 works and critiques or studies on old works and authors, viz, *Shah-jo-Risaalo* and *Sachal Sarmast jo Kalaani* and other works relating to Bedil, Bekas, Sai Dalpat, Sai Qutab Ali Shah, Kojhi, Nanak Yusuf, Rohal and Shah Abdul Karim.

Shah-jo-Risaalo needs special mention here. It was brought to India from Sind and translated into Punjabi verse in Gurmukhi script. This version was adapted into Punjabi-Urdu script in Pakistan and printed a number of times. It has also been

translated into English, Hindi and Gujarati. The publication of this work by Sindhi Academy, Delhi, derives from the work of Mirza Qalich Beg (1913) who had culled out material from manuscripts.

The second category comprises of translations from other languages into Sindhi, viz, selections from the famous Sufi classic *Tazkarat-al-Auliya* by Hazrat Farid Aldin Attar, *Rumia jo Roohani Khazano* by Parmanand Advani, and *Roohani Mushahada* and *Dewan Dastagir* by Kalyan Advani (all in Sindhi-Arabic script).

The third category includes works relating to Sindhi Sufi saints like Bekas, Bedil, Sai Roshan Ali Shah, Sai Jiwatram Matai, Qazi Qadan, Sai Hadi Baksh, and Fakir Sobhraj Harjani. These works have been printed for the first time in India.

In the fourth category are included translations of Sindhi Sufi literature in modern Indian languages and, finally, the works produced in India since independence. Special mention may be made of *Spiritual Dialogues with Sufi Saint Sai Rochal Das Sahib* by H.M. Damodar and *The Knowledge that Draws Towards Spirituality* (English version of *Ilim Ludani-va-Tohid* dealing with the *Bhagavadgita*) by Dada Sai Hari.

Printed on art paper and beautifully illustrated with pictures of Sindhi Sufi shrines and saints, the small book is eminently readable. With a little more care the typographical errors could have been avoided.

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ASCETICS AND KINGS IN JAIN RITUAL CULTURE: By Lawrence A. Babb. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, New Delhi 100007. 1998. Pp. xviii+244. Rs. 225.

This book deals with the religious tradition of the Jains. Jainism had its origin in India in the seventh or sixth century BCE. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, rejected the Upanishadic philosophy of attaining liberation or *moksha* through knowledge. Instead, he emphasized the attainment of *moksha* through a renouncement of the karmas of previous births. The followers of Mahavira propagated his philosophy of liberation through austere penance. Later the observance of rituals became an integral part of Jain worship. Jains believe that by performing rituals they can probably eradicate the evil deeds (karmas) which

people possess from their earlier births. To destroy the cycle of rebirth one has to practise certain principles through the medium of ritualistic performances.

The basic object of ritual in Jainism is 'to acquire truth, perfection and the perfect soul as embodied in the lives of Tirthankaras...' (p. xiv). In his book Lawrence A. Babb exemplifies that divine 'absence' can be as rich as divine 'presence'. The 'absent' Lord is worshipped through rituals. The ideal is the soul in perfect condition. Therefore the twenty-four Tirthankaras and other great personages in Jain hagiology are worshipped. The author examines the problem of how Jain ascetics and their followers can be brought into a system of belief and the practice that serves the religious interest of both the laity and the monastic elite.

The book offers a lucid interpretation of the Svetambara Jain tradition. The author also describes the cult of the Dadagurus. This cult of asceticism supported the worldly aspirations of the devotees. The Dadagurus served as a link between the worldly aspirations of lay worshippers and the ascetic powers associated with the Tirthankaras. They also provide a link between the religious values and the structure of contemporary Jain society. Most of the Jains are believed to be the descendants of warrior kings who were reformed by the great ascetics of the past.

The book, though narrow in scope, provides interesting and informative material on Jain culture. It is divided into five chapters with an excellent foreword and introduction. The research done by the author is extensive, methodical, and well documented. The notes at the end of the book give a thorough explication of the important terms and concepts used in the relevant chapters. A glossary, bibliography and index provide useful and necessary information. However, the book would have benefited if these Jain rituals and cultures had been discussed from a historical perspective. The book makes a significant contribution to one's understanding of Jain rituals and culture from a practical point of view.

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Book Received

THE JOURNAL OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH, MADRAS (VOLS. 64-67): Edited by Dr. S.S. Janaki. Published by The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, Madras 600004. 1998. Pp. xlvii+148. Rs.200.

News and Reports

Ramakrishna Mission Expands Activities in Gujarat

The Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Porbandar, has started many humanitarian activities by way of conducting a library and a mobile medical dispensary, and organizing free eye camps and other relief activities.

A charitable dispensary offering allopathic, homoeopathic and ayurvedic treatment was inaugurated on 13 March 1999 By Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. In his inaugural speech Swami Smarananandaji expressed satisfaction over the progress made by the Porbandar centre within a period of only two years, and exhorted the general public to extend their cooperation and help for its development. The inaugural function was attended by a large number of local dignitaries, medical practitioners and patients from nearby villages.

On 24 March 1999 Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, a Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation-stone for a building which, when completed, would house a prayer hall, lecture hall and library. The estimated cost of the proposed project is about Rs. 30 lakhs. Giving details of the project in his welcome address during the public meeting, Swami Nikhileswaranandaji, the Secretary of the centre said the library would contain books on Religion, Philosophy, Science, General Knowledge, etc.



Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj paying homage to Sri Ramakrishna during the function at Porbandar

Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday in Cherrapunji

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji, celebrated the 164th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna on 18 February 1999. This year's festivities were attended by an unusually large number of people from several villages like Khliehshnong, Laitlyndop, Laitlyngkot, Laitryngew, Mawdok, Saitsohpen, Mawkma, Mawrah, Icchamati and Bholaganj, in addition to devotees from Shella, Nartiang and Sohbar—all of whom joined a very colourful procession (inset) which was taken out from the Ashrama. A musical presentation by the Border Security Force orchestra and folk dances by the local Khasis were the highlights of the celebration.

The Secretary of the centre, Swami Nityamuktanandaji, distributed Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature on the occasion.

